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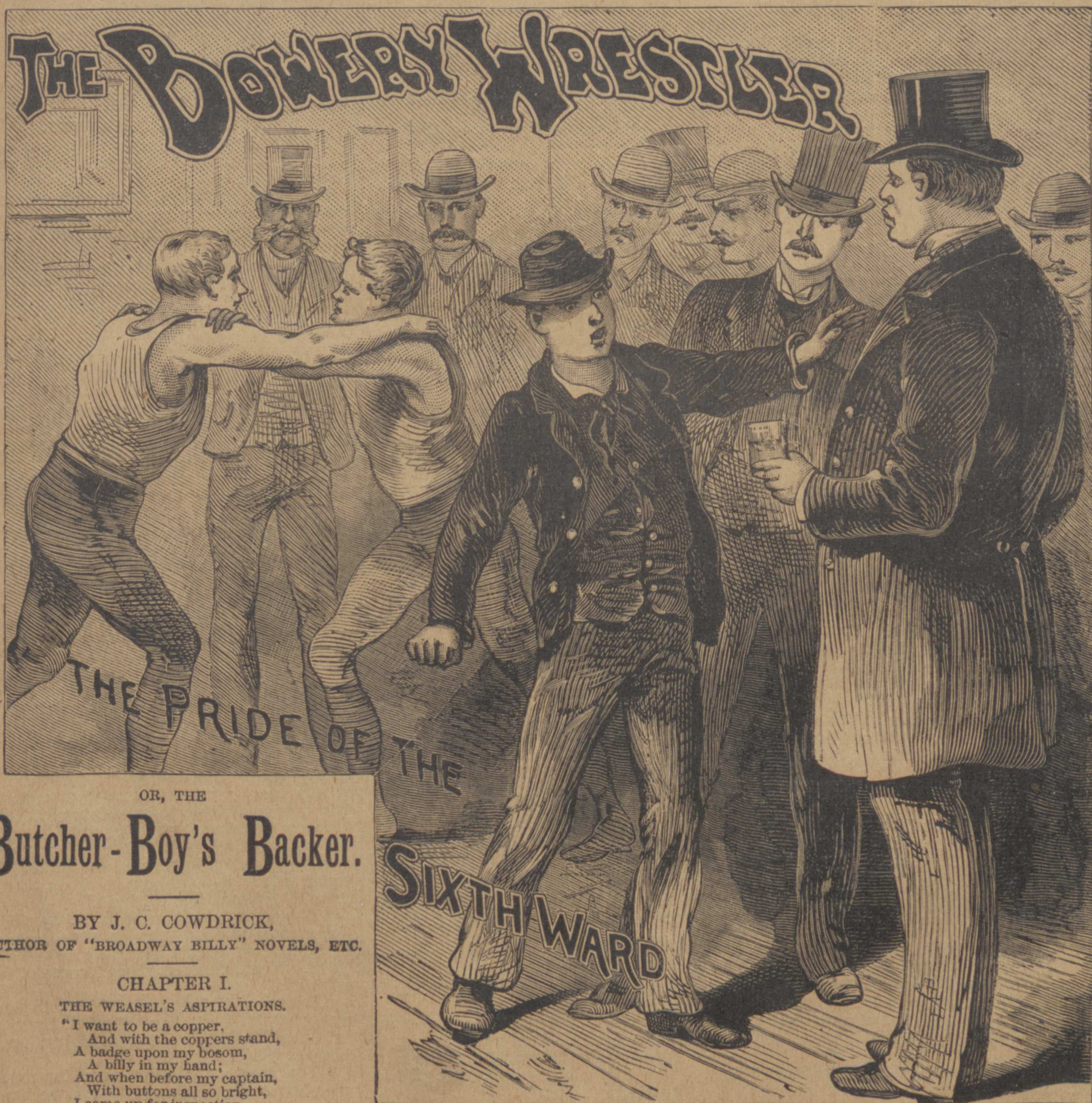
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OR, THE Butcher-Boy's Backer.

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AUTHOR OF "BROADWAY BILLY" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE WEASEL'S ASPIRATIONS.

"I want to be a copper,
And with the coppers stand,
A badge upon my bosom,
A billy in my hand;
And when before my captain,
With buttons all so bright,
I come up for inspection,
I'll be clear out of sight!"

So sang Timmy Keen, as he sauntered down

"I AM ON TO YOUR GAME, MR. HODGLEY! YOU CAN'T PLAY THAT TRICK A SECOND TIME, YOU BET! FAIR PLAY HERE!"

into Washington Market to pay a visit to his friend, Butcher-boy Buck.

And he sang loudly enough for his voice to be heard, too, with his eyes fixed upon a policeman who was sauntering along just ahead of him, swinging his club artistically.

All who listened to the lad and gave attention to his words smiled, and those who fully "caught on" enjoyed a laugh. The policeman was Jerry McKenna, a well-known officer in the section at the time of which we write—a good-humored Irish-American, who could give a joke and take one.

He stopped, smiling, and looked around and waited for Timmy to come up.

"It is you, is it, Timmy, my boy?" he asked.

"No other, Jerry!" was the jolly response.

"And it is still wanting to be a policeman you are, is it?"

"And that same I am going to be, as soon as I can raise a mustache, Jerry, you bet!"

"Well, I'll tell ye what I would do, Timmy. I wouldn't go around singing about it, if I was you. Time enough to do your singing when you get there. See? See what I mean?"

"Oh, yes, I hook my trolley fast to that, Jerry, sure enough," the boy rejoined. "But you started out to tell me what you would do, and you brought up with telling me what you wouldn't do. No matter, I stick, as the fly said to the paper.

"I want to be—"

"There, now, Timmy, no more of it, if you please, or I'll have to let you feel how heavy this billy is."

"Well, I will spare your feelings this time, Jerry. But, say, seen Buck to-day?"

"Yes; he was at his stall when I came up."

"Good enough. I have come down to make him a call if he is so busy he can't visit."

"You want to get a tip on the match that's to come off, I suppose. How much do you want to bet that Bowery Brag will get the best two out of three and win the purse?"

"Not a red! Brag Clawson can't do it, Jerry, and if you are goin' to bet that way you are goin' to lose, sure."

"Well, I ain't goin' to bet that way, Timmy."

"Good for you, Jerry! But I didn't think you would, anyhow. No, sir-ee! Brag may be a good dog, but Butcher-boy Buck is better. Brag can't begin to throw one side of our Buck!"

"Well, I hope you are right, Timmy. Let me know what Buck has to say to you, for I have got a little stake upon the result meself."

"You are safe enough, Jerry; never fear."

So they parted, and Timmy, when a little distance off, broke out singing again:

"I want to be a copper,
One of the 'finest' kind,
And wear a stand-up collar
And white gloves, don't you mind;
Then when I'm out on duty,
So very swell I'll be,
I'll captivate the ladies;
There'll be no flies on me!"

Jerry, the policeman, looked after him, a little provoked, it may be, for he was inclined to be fastidious of appearance, but he had to smile with the others, nevertheless.

Timmy Keen was a jolly, round-faced, clear-eyed boy of fifteen years or so, and his wit was in keeping with his name. He was not very tall for his age, but was strong limbed and well put together, as

was said of him. He was well rounded, and his flesh was hard and firm.

There were two reasons for this. In the first place, he was free from tobacco and other vices that sap the strength of youth, and he was learning to wrestle under the tuition of his friend, Buck Gallagher, or Butcher-boy Buck, as he was better known, which kept every muscle of his body in the finest condition all the time. He was strong, decidedly.

Buck Gallagher, by the way, was a young man aged twenty.

He had worked in and around Washington Market ever since he had been able to work at all, and there had gained the nickname he bore.

Of fine muscle and great strength, he had trained himself in wrestling until he classed well with the better amateur wrestlers of his day, and, as we have already revealed, a match was on between him and another young man.

Just as Timmy ended his singing he came to the stall where Butcher-boy Buck was employed.

"Hello, Timmy!" he was greeted.

"Take it back again, Buck," was the response.

"What brings you around here?"

"Came to see you."

"And you are still wanting to be a copper, are you?"

"Such is my soaring ambition, Buck. I think I could outshine even Jerry McKenna."

"Ha, ha! He will give you a taste of a copper's billy, if you don't let up. He will put a shiner on your eye for you. He thinks you are taking him off, you know."

"Oh! I know that, all right; that's one reason I do it. But he don't mind some fun, and he wouldn't hit a little fellow like me. Besides, I stand in all right with Jerry, you bet! I happen to know the girl he is sweet on, and I come in handy sometimes."

"You are right, then, sure."

"I guess so. But, say; they say you won't be able to dump Brag. How about that?"

"Look here; who has been beefin' you that way?"

"Well, I heard two fellers on the Bowery talking about it, and I wanted to know."

"It won't be my fault if I don't, that's all, Timmy. I am in good trim for it, now."

"I heard one of 'em say you was drinkin'."

"Drinking! I don't know the taste of it. Do you suppose I could show up a muscle like that if I was a drinker?"

As he spoke the wrestler made a display of the muscular development of his arms, which was certainly splendid, and his more youthful copy looked upon it admiringly.

"Well, I didn't believe it," declared Timmy, "but then I wanted to hear you say it wasn't so, that was all."

"If you hear any one else say so, you just tell him he— Well, be as polite about it as you can."

"Yes, I will whisper it at him if he is bigger'n I am," said the Weasel, laughing.

That was Timmy's nickname—the Weasel.

"Are you putting up any bets on it, Timmy?" asked Buck.

"Sure I am. I have got up two quarters and a half, and I am going to put up more if I can raise the wind between now and Saturday night. But, say, Buck, there is another thing."

"What is that, Timmy?"

"You want to cut loose from Stainer."

"Why, what's the matter with him?"

"Well, I don't know of anything that could prove, but I seen him talkin' with Bowery Brag the other night."

"Is that so? That looks suspicious, then. If I can catch him at it myself I will fire him so quick he will feel dizzy. I'll take you in his place, if I do, Timmy."

"That will tickle me 'most to death! But, don't go for Stainer on my say-so, Buck; mebbly I am all wrong."

"I will go slow about it, Timmy."

Just then Buck's employer called for a quarter of beef for the block, and Buck stepped into the refrigerator and carried it out as easily, apparently, as if it had been a shoulder of mutton.

Timmy watched him admiringly, and finding that Buck was likely to be busy, said his good-by and went off, his head full of the coming wrestling match. But if his head was full of that, his tongue was full of song, and he went singing:

"I want to be a copper,
A copper on Broadway,
To help a hundred ladies
In crossing every day;
And when my arm I offer
To a pretty girl afraid,
I'll swell my breast and strut it
Like a gobble on parade!"

CHAPTER II.

TIMMY LEARNS SOMETHING.

Timmy Keen had been gone only a little while when Butcher-boy Buck had another visitor.

Buck was again at leisure, and greeted the second caller as he came up.

"What's the best word with you, Stainer?"

"No best word to offer," was the response. "How's things with you?"

"Oh, so-so."

"In good shape yet?"

"Couldn't be better."

"That's good. All you have got to do is to hold out that way until Saturday night."

"And I'll hold out; don't worry. But how is it with Bowery Brag? Is he in good shape for the tussle, do you think?"

"Gibbins says he is."

"He would say so, anyhow. Don't you know yourself?"

"No; how could I know?"

"You were talking with him the other night, I understand."

Ned Stainer changed color for an instant, under the steady gaze of the man he was training.

"Who said I was?" he demanded.

"No matter, I got it straight, and I want to tell you that if you are going to do my rubbing down you have got to keep away from the others."

"Seems to me you are jumpin' before you are stuck, ain't ye? What if I did speak to Bowery Brag? That ain't sayin' that I am goin' back on you, is it? I'd like to know who told ye."

"No matter who told me; you have heard what I have to say about it, Ned. It is my business, just now, and I am going to look after it. Any other time wouldn't matter, but from now until Saturday night I want you to keep away from Brag and Gibbins, both."

"Mebby you don't want me to speak if I'm spoken to?"

"You know what I mean; no talks with them. There can't any good come of it, anyhow."

"But what if I am only fishing to find out what kind of shape Bowery Brag is in? And that is all I was doing, anyhow; that's honest."

"The time is too short, now, for us to care how he is making out. All we have got to do is to look out for our side of the match and see that we are ready for the tussle."

"Well, no need to get mad about it."

"I am not mad; I have only given you fair warning, that is all."

"All right; I will keep away from them, for I want to see you through with the thing."

"No need to say any more about it, then."

Their talk ended, Stainer went on his way.

He was a young man, maybe twenty-five years of age, one of the "smart" appearing sort. He was not bad looking, and had a neat mustache, but his face showed dissipation, and his clothes were getting seedy.

"I'd like to know who told him that," he muttered to himself, when he had gone a little distance. "Somebody is on to me, and I will have to look out how I handle this thing or I will get my skin blistered. Lucky for me that the matter is about settled."

It was clear that something was wrong.

Before he had gone half a dozen blocks he came face to face with the very person he desired to see, and at the same time whom he should now avoid.

This was "Brag" Clawson, the fellow who was pitted against Butcher-boy Buck for the match that was soon to come off. He was a big fellow, with a rather bullet-shaped head.

He was strolling idly, smoking a cigar.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, on seeing Stainer. "Speak of the Nick, and he is bound to appear! Not that I have spoken your name, Ned, but I was thinkin' about you as I came along."

He held out his hand in a frank way, but Stainer held back.

"You'll have to excuse me, Brag," he made apology, "but I can't shake with you this time. Buck is on to us, and has given me warning not to be seen talkin' with you again between now and Saturday. Whatever we have got to say has got to be said here and now."

"The deuce he is on to us! Then I know how he got on, you bet!"

"How was that?"

"Through that little weasel, Timmy Keen."

"You don't mean it. I was trying to think, and never thought of him."

"He is the very chap, and you can bet on it. I saw him just after we parted company the other night."

"Well, he didn't hear anything we said, or Buck would have let it out, for he just now went for me red hot. But you let me meet Timmy Keen, and see if I don't tan his coat."

"What did Buck have to say?"

Ned repeated as nearly as possible what had passed between him and Buck, and Bowery Brag's face showed displeasure.

"There is danger that he will find it out before it comes to a head, Ned," he declared. "You will have to work it your nicest, and don't forget that a hundred dollars isn't to be picked up every day."

"That is what I have got my eye on, Brag."

"Well, it won't do for us to be seen talking here, if the cat is out of the bag. Here is the bottle; all you have got to do is to put a little of it on his skin when you rub him down Friday, on his back and breast, and by Saturday night he will be sore enough."

"But how am I to do it? He will want to know what it is the minute he sees the bottle."

"You won't let him see it, goose. Have a little of it on a sponge and all ready, and get it on when you dry him. He will never know it till it begins to get in its work."

"And the money?"

"You will get that as soon as the match is over."

"Yes, but what if you lose anyhow? I want my pay made sure, or I back out right here and now."

"You will be paid, anyhow, if you do your part all right. If his skin is all broke out with a rash, that will be the proof that you have done it; the oil cannot fail."

Bowery Brag gave Ned a tiny bottle containing some— But, it were better not to name the compound, for obvious reasons.

Stainer put it away in his pocket, and in another minute they parted.

In stopping, they had drawn aside out of the passing throng to an open doorway, where they stood while speaking.

When they had gone, a keen-eyed boy came out from behind the great door with a grin on his face, and placing one forefinger alongside his nose, he slowly winked his eye.

The boy was Timmy Keen.

Coming down the stairs at the moment when Brag and Stainer met, it had been the work of an instant for him to dodge behind the big door.

"I thought so," he said to himself. "Good thing I have got on to their job, or they might have made a mess of it for Buck. But I am on to the pair as big as a horse."

He could not help chuckling to himself at the thought.

"But what am I going to do with my load of information?" he asked himself.

"Shall I go and dump it out to Buck at once, or shall I draw it myself a while and put it up Stainer's back when the time comes? By the way, he is going to dust my jacket when we meet, I believe."

This caused Timmy to smile, as if he doubted the ability of the fellow in that direction.

"I have a mind to go and put myself in his way, while he is in the notion," he said, further. "But that might get us in limbo and spoil the fun for Saturday night, if any other policeman than Jerry happened to fall on us, so I will postpone that pleasure for a time, unless it happens by accident. And I don't see anything to be gained by following Bowery Brag. Guess I'll let 'em both go, for now."

He turned up the street, undecided whether to go and report at once to Buck or to keep the secret to himself, for a time, and before he had made up his mind he caught sight of Jerry McKenna.

The boy grinned from ear to ear, and as he drew near to the policeman he began to sing:

"I want to be a copper,
One of the finest force,
And finest of the finest
I'd aim to be, of course;
Then I would swing my billy
As I walked up and down,
Till I would be the envy
Of all the cops in town!"

CHAPTER III.

MISSING WOMAN.

Jerry McKenna waited for Timmy to come up.

Timmy pretended not to see him until Jerry spoke, when the lad stopped short in his singing.

"See here, Timothy, boy," the policeman remonstrated, "a little fun is all right in its place, but you are carrying a joke too far. I want you to stop this singing about me."

"Singing about you?" exclaimed Timmy, with pretended great surprise.

"Who has been singing about you?"

"You have, that's who."

"Now, Jerry!"

"Do you mean to say you haven't?"

"Of course I haven't! 'Cause why, I have been singing about myself. You just wait until I get full size and grow a mustache, Jerry, and see if I won't break the hearts of the rest of you boys with envy. You will be a back number by that time, Jerry, and I will be right in it."

"Oh, bother take you!" the policeman cried, impatiently. "There is no law to make you stop, I suppose. If there was, I would put it on you for all I am worth and make you sing another tune."

"Now, Jerry!"

His manner of saying that was inimitable, and in spite of himself the policeman had to laugh.

"Well, I was only in fun, of course," the bluecoat declared. "I don't care how much you sing about being a policeman. It won't seem so rosy when you get there, that is all."

"Oh, yes, it will, Jerry—the kind of policeman I mean to be. Let me sing you another—"

"Not a word! I want you to do a favor for me, Timmy."

"All right; I know where to find her, Jerry," cried Timmy. "What is it this time—a note or a bouquet?"

"It is neither," with impatience. "Why don't you wait until I finish? As to your knowing where to find her, I don't know whether you do or not. That is just what I want you to do."

"Find her? Have you lost her, Jerry?"

"Timmy, I am not fooling, and I want you to stop it, too."

"Great chickory! Neither am I fooling, Jerry! If you have lost your gal, that is enough to take the fooling out of you."

"Well, will you do me a favor, Timmy?"

"Two or three of them, Jerry."

"You know her name?"

"Miss Julia Claverton."

"That is it; and, come to think, it was you found it out for me, in the first place. Well, you know where she works, and I want you to go there on the quiet and find out where she is."

"Then she isn't there to-day?"

"Neither yesterday nor to-day, Timmy."

"That is serious, sure enough. How much is there in it, Jerry?"

"I'll give you half a dollar if you will bring me straight news regarding the lady."

"That's a bargain, Jerry. I'll find out as soon as I can, and be around here again and let you know. Maybe she is sick, or has gone off on a vacation, or got married—"

"Get on with you or I'll rap you with my stick."

Timmy dodged the pretended blow, and made haste on the errand that had been entrusted to him, and as he went he went singing.

The policeman looked after him with a half scowl and half smile, and suddenly turned and walked away to escape the glances of those who were taking it in.

"Timmy is a good boy," he said to himself, "and I like him in spite of myself, but I do wish he would let up on that singing about policemen every time he sees me. He knows I don't like it, and that is just the reason he does it. If he wasn't so fine a lad I'd get mad."

Julia Claverton was a stenographer and typewriter—a pretty girl, maybe twenty-four years of age, and whose home was in New Jersey.

Coming in every morning, at a certain time, she had met the dandy policeman on several occasions, until, at last, Jerry had put himself in the way of meeting her every morning.

In the course of time, through some

means or other, she would bid him good morning when they would meet, and that fairly set the honest policeman's heart on fire for her. And it was just there that Timmy Keen's services had come in handy. He had been able to learn her name and where she was employed.

She was in the service of a firm of lawyers, who had their office on one of the streets in Jerry's beat, and her desk was by one of the windows, as Jerry was not long in discovering.

Daily he would walk past there just as many times as the regulations allowed, if not, indeed, a little oftener.

And, once in a while, a smile would reward him.

But now, for two days, he had seen nothing of the object of his devotion, and hence he mourned.

It would never do for him to go himself to inquire about her, and, in his dilemma, Timmy Keen was just the person for the emergency. Timmy was smart enough to do the work gallantly.

"Rather rough on Jerry," the lad remarked, as he hastened off on the errand. "I hope she hasn't gone and got married, for that will break him all up. He is dead stuck on her, no mistake about that!"

The Weasel hastened on and soon reached his destination—a building devoted exclusively to business offices, and the directory in the hallway informed visitors that Gormer & Peell occupied rooms 20 and 22.

These were the employers of Miss Claverton, as Timmy knew, and he lost no time in making his way to their offices and entering. And as he made his debut upon the scene he found a woman there, crying.

"What shall I do? What shall I do?"

So she was saying between her sobs, and was wringing her hands in an almost hysterical manner.

She was a woman of middle age, a little body, and plainly dressed, and she had a gentle, rather refined-looking face. That she was in great distress of mind was clearly evident.

The two proprietors of the office were standing near her, their faces expressing more of annoyance than sympathy, as the Weasel thought the moment he saw them, and one or two clerks or assistants were looking up from their work in an interested way.

All stared at Timmy when he entered.

"I hardly know what you can do, Mrs. Claverton, except to inform the police," remarked the elder partner.

At mention of that name, the Weasel was on the alert in an instant, for he guessed that this was the mother of Miss Claverton, and that something had happened.

"But can't you help me, Mr. Gormer?" she urged. "I do not know how to proceed or what to do. I am so nervous that I am hardly fit for anything. If you will lend me some assistance, it is all I will ask. I do not even know where to go to inform the police."

"Really, Mrs. Claverton, this is a busy day with us," said the old lawyer. "Our time is money, and with our stenographer missing, we are terribly behind with the substitute we have picked up. We are not supposed to become guardians over our employes, I should hope. However, I will telephone to the central station for you and start the inquiry. But you had better go there in person."

"Yes, go in person, by all means," spoke up the junior partner. "It will be much more satisfactory."

"What do you want, boy?" demanded the senior, turning upon the Weasel.

"I want to find Julia Claverton!" Timmy announced.

"You want to find my daughter?" exclaimed the woman. "Who, then, are you? What do you know about her?"

"Come with me, and I will tell you," answered the boy. "We might rob these gentlemen of a precious minute or two if we stay here. I will take you to headquarters, and we will find her, too, you bet!"

CHAPTER IV.

TIMMY TAKES THE TRAIL.

Something about the lad gave the woman confidence in him.

Perhaps it was his bold, brisk manner, or maybe his keen and flashing eyes; we will not stop to question.

The two lawyers and their clerks looked at the lad in amazement, the latter with some inclination to smile, but apparently afraid to do so in the presence of their employers.

Timmy laid his hand on the door.

The woman stepped forward to accompany him, having found that she could get no satisfaction there.

"Hold on, boy!" spoke up Mr. Gormer. "Who are you, and where do you come from? How did you know that Miss Claverton was missing? You must tell us what you know about this matter."

"Oh, no! It would take too much of your very valuable time," retorted Timmy, opening the door. "Wouldn't think of robbing you of a second, if I could help it. You can't be guardians over your helpers; not to be thought of! Come on, Mrs. Claverton! We will find—"

"Hold on, sir!" cried Gormer. "I am bound to know where your interest in this matter lies! Where did you hear—"

"No time to waste on you, sir!" averred the boy, stiffly.

He passed out; the woman followed, and the closing of the door cut off the lawyer's further explosions.

"I am afraid you have angered the gentleman," expostulated Mrs. Claverton, as they passed down the stairs to the street. "It may be against my interests if you have done that."

"I don't care a pickled herring if I have!" cried Timmy. "It was plain that they did not mean to help you, not even a little bit, and it served them right. We can get along without them, I guess, and maybe we will show them a thing or two before we get done, the Hidalgos!"

They had now reached the bottom of the stairs.

There the woman stopped, detaining Timmy by taking hold of his arm.

"I must know who you are before we go any further," she declared. "What is your name?"

"Timmy Keen, ma'am."

"And do you know my daughter?"

"I know her by sight, ma'am. Have seen her."

"And you said to the gentlemen that you had come to find her."

"Yes, that's straight."

"Well, why did you come? Who sent you? Who knew she was missing? I am her mother, and you must tell me all about it."

"Haden't we better move right along to police headquarters, if you are going there, ma'am? I can tell you all about that as we go along, and it will save time, you see."

"But I do not know you. How do I know you are honest?"

"Guess you will have to take my word for it, ma'am. I know my face don't say so, but—"

"Well, I will take your word for it," looking into his keen, fearless eyes as she

spoke. "We will go to the police, as you suggest, if you are sure you know the way."

"Bless you, ma'am, I know this little island better than old Manhattan ever knew it himself!" exclaimed the would-be-policeman. "We will step up to Broadway, take a car and ride to Houston street, and then it won't be but a couple of steps, so to say. You can't lose me in this village!"

His breezy manner increased the woman's confidence in him.

Together they left the hallway of the building, and turned their steps in the direction of Broadway.

"Now, tell me what you know about my daughter," the woman urged. "You cannot understand how troubled I am, and how impatient to hear something about her."

"I can guess it, though, ma'am. I know you must be all in a stew and pucker, for Jerry is all broke up over it, and you are her mother. Wish I knowed where to find her right off quick for you, ma'am."

"Who in the world is Jerry?"

"A policeman that is stuck on your Julia."

"Mercy! Is it possible that my child has stooped to—"

"Say! Hold on right there, ma'am! I guess you never seen Jerry McKenna."

"No, I never did, and never want to, unless he is responsible for my dear child, and if he is I want to see him hanged!"

"Don't you go to gettin' cross-grained at Jerry, ma'am. He is one of the finest, he is; and as for your daughter's stoop-in', I think you will say she knowed what she was about when you see Jerry McKenna."

"But, in mercy, tell me about my daughter!"

"How can I? That is what we are going to find out."

"Then take me to this policeman you speak of. I must see—"

"No use, ma'am; he don't know a thing about her any more'n I do. Fact of the business is, it was him sent me to look for her."

"The wretch— No, I will not say that, if he is honest, as you seem to believe he is. I may wrong him. But how did he know my daughter was missing? Tell me everything you can, I beg of you."

"I reckon you have a right to know, seein' that you are the girl's mother, and I will tell you all about it if you will tell me some things in return. I have a notion to play the detective in this matter, and see if I can't find the young lady for you and Jerry."

"Yes, yes; I will tell you anything you have a mind to ask me."

"That is a bargain, then. Didn't she never mention anything to you about Jerry?"

"Why, no, never a word, or I would not be so surprised to learn of it now. Mercy! my heart will break if any ill has happened to her!"

"Well, Jerry is a gentleman, every inch of him, and I will stake my last copper on him. He is as much worried about the lady as you are, ma'am. We thought mebbe she was at home sick, or something."

"Does he know where she lives?"

"No; that was the mischief of it. He couldn't find out anything about her, and so he got me to go to the office and ask."

Briefly, then, but to the point, Timmy told all he knew about the affaire d'amour between the good-looking policeman and the pretty stenographer, placing Jerry in the best light possible.

"Well, I can see that Julia has done no

The Bowery Wrestler.

wrong," avowed the mother, apparently much relieved. "I hope the policeman is as honorable as you think him, and I have no doubt he is. I must see him before I go home, for maybe he can tell me something— But you say he knows nothing?"

"Nothing about the lady, ma'am."

"Then our only hope lies in police assistance. Do we take the car here?"

They had reached Broadway.

"Yes, ma'am, and here comes one, right at hand."

The street pilot signalled the car, and when they had got safely on board and taken seats, he started the conversation again.

"Now, I have told you all I can tell, ma'am," he remarked, "and you must keep the promise you made. I want to know everything you can tell me that may shed light on to the mystery."

"What good will it do?"

"I don't know; I can't be of much use unless you do tell me, that is certain, ma'am."

The car was not crowded, and they could carry on their conversation without being overheard.

"Well, what do you want to know?" the woman asked.

"Everything. Have you any secret suspicion about the matter? You needn't be afraid to trust me, for I am on your side to the finish."

"You talk as if your head were older than your body," the woman commented. "I am willing to tell you everything I possibly can, if it will be of any use in leading to the finding of my child."

"That part of it remains to be seen. Do you think it possible that she has eloped with anybody?"

"Mercy, no!"

"Well, I hope not, for that would break Jerry all up, sure enough. Do you know of any reason why anybody would want to put her out of the way?"

"Merciful Heavens, no! You fairly terrify me, boy."

"Well, I don't see as there is much use of my trying to question. I am not deep enough for that. Wait till we get to headquarters, and then I will scoop in what the chief can bring out."

So the matter was dropped, and was not mentioned again on the way. In due time they alighted at Houston Street, and a short walk brought them to the police headquarters on Mulberry Street. Timmy had been there before, and knew the way into the chief's office.

CHAPTER V.

MRS. CLAVERTON MEETS JERRY.

The great chief of police was in, and, at the moment, was disengaged; so Mrs. Claverton was able to pour out her story without delay as soon as they entered.

"You say this is the third day?" was the first question asked.

"Yes, sir. I have not seen her since the day before yesterday morning, when she left home."

"Was she at her office that day?"

"I suppose so."

"Yes, she was," spoke up Timmy. "Jerry McKenna says so."

"And who is he?" asked the chief.

"One of your boys in blue, sir," was the prompt answer.

"And where have I seen you before?" was then inquired. "Are you not the boy who aided my detectives about a month ago, in a case they were working?"

"I'm the same chap," acknowledged the street courier.

"And they called you the Weasel?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought so. Mrs. Claverton, you could not have picked up a better helper than you have found in this boy. He is a weasel, in fact, though ferret would be a better name for him."

This caused Timmy to hang his head, and the hot blood mounted to his face. Mrs. Claverton looked at him with admiration.

"I thought I could not be mistaken in his face, sir," she rejoined. "I have placed confidence in him, already. I have told him that he has a wise head for one so young."

"Well, about this matter. What can you tell me that will shed some light upon it?"

"I hardly know what I can tell you, sir."

"Then I shall have to question you. Your daughter was a single person?"

"Yes, sir."

"Had she a lover?"

"Well, yes; there is a young man who was devoted to her."

"Were they affianced?"

"Oh, no; she had once rejected his proposal."

"Who is this young man?"

"His name is Paul Clayman."

"Where does he live?"

"In our village, Valewood."

"How does he take this matter?"

"I have not seen him, sir."

"Then he is not at home?"

"Really, I do not know; I had not thought of him."

"What kind of a fellow is he? What is his age? Good character?"

"He is about twenty-five years old, younger than my daughter, and I never heard a breath against him, sir."

"What is his business?"

"He is a clerk in one of the stores in Valewood."

"When you return home I will have you telegraph to me whether he is at home or not."

The chief made a memorandum of the name, and so forth.

"I will do so, sir."

"Has your daughter ever remained away like this before?"

"Never, without first letting me know all about her reason and her plans, sir."

"And you looked for her home that night, the same as usual?"

"Yes, sir."

"And yet you were not enough alarmed to inquire about her the next day, it appears."

"Well, I was worried, but I certainly looked for her home last night. You know how it rained the day before, and I satisfied myself with the thought that maybe she had remained in the city with a girl friend."

"Who is this girl friend?"

"A Mary Farley."

"Have you her address?"

"No, sir; but she is a stenographer, too."

"Are you a widow?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you any suspicion against any one regarding your daughter?"

"Not the slightest, sir. It is all a dark riddle to me. Oh! can you not give me some hope—some encouragement?"

"I can only tell you that I will do all that lies in my power to get some information for you concerning your daughter. Go home, for you can do nothing here, and I will write or telegraph."

"That settles it," said Timmy Keen, rising. "Let's go, ma'am, and you can depend on it that the boss will find her if she is to be found."

The lady rose to take leave.

"What are you going to do, my boy?" the chief asked.

"I am going into this thing for all I am worth, sir," answered the Weasel.

"Very well, do so. I shall put Reilly and Irwin on this case, and you can lend them assistance."

"That suits me first rate," assured the boy. "I am not very big, and don't amount to much, but all the same I get there when the band plays, every time, somehow or other."

There was something decidedly fresh and breezy about the lad.

The chief had to smile at him, and Mrs. Claverton earnestly voicing her thanks, they took leave.

"Where shall we go now?" the lady inquired.

"Won't you go home, as he advised you to do?" Timmy asked.

"How can I? I fell as if I ought to be doing something toward finding my child."

"I guess you have done all you can, ma'am. But if you want to see Jerry McKenna before you go, as you said, we will go and find him. What do you say?" asked the youth.

"Yes, yes. I desire to see him."

"Come on, then."

Timmy acted the part of guide and conductor, and took the shortest and quickest route to the lower part of the city again.

Knowing where Jerry was likely to be found at that hour of the day, they did not have to search long for him. He was presently sighted, coming along swinging his stick artistically.

"That's him, ma'am," informed Timmy.

"What a fine looking man he is," observed Mrs. Claverton.

"And he is just as fine as he looks, too. There's no flies on Jerry, you bet! 'Scuse my slang; I didn't mean it."

Timmy apologized instantly, and Jerry, catching sight of him just then, the lad signalled him to approach. The temptation to sing a verse was great, but the extempore poet and singer resisted.

"Jerry," he said, "I couldn't find her, but I found her mother. Let me introduce you to Mrs. Claverton."

The officer turned burning red, and with some confusion acknowledged the introduction.

"This boy has told me everything, sir," the lady at once remarked. "Will you tell me when and where you last saw my daughter, sir?"

It was a moment or so before Jerry could pull himself together, so to say, for Timmy had knocked him out, as it were. But he was soon able to appear at his ease.

"The last time I saw her was about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, day before yesterday, madam. She was then in the office of Gormer & Peell, and I saw her by the window. I have seen nothing of her since, and I will say that I am somewhat anxious."

"A good deal anxious," spoke up Timmy. "I have broke the ice for you, Jerry, clear through; don't be afraid to plunge in."

The officer flushed again, and looked daggers at the lad.

"I understand," said the lady. "I have reported it to the police, and I hope you will do all in your power to aid in learning what has become of my daughter. I believe you are an honest man."

"I try to be, madam! I will be honest with you in this matter. I love your daughter, and I intend to ask for release from duty until she can be found. You have heard all about it from this boy, it seems, and this is a time when nothing should be held back."

"I thank you for your frankness, sir, at any rate," avowed the mother.

CHAPTER VI.

TIMMY AND JERRY PLAN.

A little further talk and the woman took leave of the policeman and the Weasel.

It was about time for her to catch a train, and as there was nothing she could do further, she decided to return home and there await tidings of her daughter.

"What did you do that for, Timmy?" demanded Jerry, the minute the lady had left them. "Give me away like that?"

"Now that is a fine question for you to ask, Jerry McKenna! Haven't I broken the ice for you in the neatest kind of way? It is all plain sailing for you, now, or it will be as soon as we find the young lady again. You mean to ask her mother to give her away, don't you?"

"I'll have to wait until I ask the young lady herself, first, my boy. And, maybe, she will turn up her nose at me—a common policeman! You ought to have kept that part of it to yourself, Timmy."

"How could I? I did what was best for the best."

"Well, it is done."

"And you are a hundred miles further advanced than you would have been in a year, at your rate of going it. But, Jerry, there is a rival in the field. I have been getting points for you."

At the mention of a rival the policeman paled for an instant.

"Do you mean that?" he asked.

"Sure."

"Who is he?"

"His name is Paul Clayman. He is clerk in a store out there at Valewood. That is where the Clavertons live."

"I would make a putty man of him if I could tap him with this stick once for luck!" averred the officer, vengefully. "If it is a choice between a policeman and a clerk, maybe there is some show for me."

"And you one of the finest! Of course there is a show for you, Jerry. But Byrnes wanted some particulars about that fellow, and it looked to me as if he suspected him of having some finger in this pie. Mrs. Claverton is to telegraph to him and let him know whether the fellow is at home or not."

"If I get off duty I will go out there, sure as my name is McKenna."

"But you mustn't get into any duel scrape with that clerk, Jerry, or he may run you through with his yardstick."

"I don't want to get into trouble with anybody, Timmy, but the fellow that has harmed Miss Claverton is going to get into trouble with me, and you can bet on it!"

"Well, I don't blame you. But I must jog along now, for I have other fish to fry."

"And let me know what you find out, Timmy."

"Sure. By the way, Reilly and Irwin are to have charge of this case, and I am to help them. If you get off duty I'll take you in with me, and we'll make a team."

"All right, my boy."

The Weasel took leave, and went off singing:

"I want to be a copper,
And wear a copper hat,
And copper coat and trousers,
And in my hand a bat;
A clean shave every morning,
My boots shined twice a day,
I'd be a polished copper;
Sing, hey! what d'ye say?"

Jerry looked after him, neither provoked nor pleased, for he was thinking about something else, and the words were lost upon him that time.

Timmy had not gone a great distance when he came suddenly face to face with Ned Stainer.

Both stopped, and Stainer glared at Timmy threateningly.

"I want to have a word with you," Timmy Keen, he said, in ugly mood.

"All right; have a dozen if you want to," invited Timmy, cheerfully.

"What did you want to go and carry tales about me to Butcher-boy Buck for?" the trainer demanded.

"Carry tales about you? Can you prove that I have been carrying any tales about you? If you can, then of course it must be so."

"Well, ain't it so?"

"Your saying so don't make it so."

"Look out, or I'll wipe up the sidewalk with you."

"Say, you are talking big, ain't you? Do you think you could do that little trick?"

"Could I do it? I have a notion to show you, that's what I have. You went and told Buck that I had been talking with Bowery Brag, and Buck jumped on to me with both feet a while ago."

"Well, if it wasn't so, what are you kicking about?"

"I wanted to know who stated such a yarn."

"Well, I'll never tell you."

The trainer glared at the boy as if he doubted this seriously, and yet he had no proof.

"I did stop and speak to Brag the other night," he said, "and you were seen not far off at the same time, so it looks mighty suspicious of you, that is all I have got to say."

"Then I suppose you are ready to cork up."

"What is that?"

"If you have got no more to say, I suppose you are done."

"You have got too much lip for a kid! If I find out it was you, I will pulverize you."

"Maybe you had better do it, anyhow, to make a sure thing of it," Timmy suggested, tauntingly. "But mind your eye while you are about it, that is all!"

"Yes, and you mind your head, or you will get it punched! You know me, and I guess you don't need more'n one fair warning. If I did speak to Bowery Brag, that was nobody's business, anyhow."

"I should call it my business, if I was Buck, and knew about it."

"You would, hey?"

"Sure I would."

"Well, it would be none of your business, see? Buck don't own me, and I would tell him so. If he is afraid to trust me, let him get somebody else to train him, that's all."

"Seems to me you are mighty waspy, Ned Stainer. If there was nothing in it, why are you buzzing so much? There is no harm done, is there? And if I did see you talking with Brag, or his man, either, I would tell Buck, and you can depend on it."

"Which is the same as saying that you are the one that did tell him."

"I didn't say so."

"No, but I do."

"Well, when you can prove it, then come to me and we will settle it. No use talking through your hat about it."

Ned Stainer was white with anger, and it was a wonder that he did not go for his little tormentor there and then, but he didn't. He looked around as if to see what the chances were, and the sight of a policeman no doubt deterred him.

That policeman was Jerry.

Forgetting something he had wanted to say to Timmy, he had turned back that way in the hope of seeing him.

"And you are able to talk mighty big when you see a copper in sight," was the fellow's retort. "I will give you a slap in

the mouth the first time I get a good chance to do it."

"You will never have a better chance," invited Timmy, bracing up to him.

"And have that cop run me in for it. Oh, no; not any; but I have got it in for you, all the same."

He hastened off before Jerry came up, and the boy waited to see what the policeman wanted, as he had signaled to speak to him. In another minute Jerry was with him.

"What was that fellow saying to you?" Jerry asked.

"Oh, he was rattling, that was all," assured Timmy, carelessly. "What do ye want, Jerry?"

"I want to tell you where my boarding place is, so you will know where to get on track of me if I do get off for a few days. You can find me at No. — — Street."

They then parted, and the policeman-in-embryo went singing:

"Oh! when I am a copper,
I tell you I shall shine,
No cop will have his buttons
Quite so bright as mine;
I'll tend straight to business,
And on my post be found;
Whenever I am wanted,
You bet I'll be around!"

CHAPTER VII.

PLAYING CLEVER CARDS.

The Weasel now wanted to see Butcher-boy Buck.

He had made up his mind what to do in regard to what he had learned of the scheme against him.

Buck was at leisure, as it happened, when Timmy got there, and was surprised to see his young friend again. He knew immediately that something of moment had occurred or been learned.

"What is it, Timmy?" he asked.

"I want to post you a little, Buck, on Stainer and Brag."

"Hello! Have you got on to them?"

"Some. I want you to let me handle it, though."

"What for?"

"'Cause I can do it, and I want to even things up with them. See? You are supposed to be dead, this act."

"I don't know about that, Timmy. If there is anything in the wind, I ought to know all about it, so as to be on my guard against it. I think you will have to tell me."

"Then you will fire Stainer, and that will spoil the whole thing."

"You want him kept on?"

"Sure! Can't work my point unless you do that. He is a bad one, clear to the roots of his hair, but he can't catch a weasel asleep, you bet!"

"You are right, there! He will have to move lively to get ahead of you. But what is it? You must tell me, now, for you have got me wideawake myself. What game are they up to?"

"You won't give it away?"

"No."

"And you will keep Stainer on and give me a chance at him?"

"Yes."

"All right; then I'll unbutton. You see, I chanced to catch Stainer and Brag together again, and this time I heard every word they said."

"Bully for you!"

"That was what I said. The Bowery wrestler has hired Stainer to go back on you, and he is going to try to fix you so you won't be in it when the match comes off. He is a greaser, that fellow!"

"I should say so! What are they trying to do?"

"Brag gave Ned a little bottle of stuff, and he is to rub some of it on your

breast and back next time he rubs you down."

"I'll rub it down his throat, confound him! That is the kind of a skunk he is, is it? By glory, but I will take it out of his hide the first time I get him within reach."

"There, I expected you would forget—"

"Ha! that's so! I did forget my promise to you, Timmy. But it is enough to make a fellow boil over."

"I agree with you there, Buck, but I want you to be just as nice as pie to the scab and let me deal with him. I have got a plan that will fix him out so he won't forget it in a hurry."

"What is it, Timmy?"

"Now, that ain't fair, Buck, to ask me that."

"Why?"

"'Cause that is my game. I have told you the plot, and all that, and now I want you to let me handle it and work up the agony."

"It is trusting a good deal to you, Timmy. Suppose you fail to connect, and the scoundrel rubs that stuff on my skin, what then? I tell you it is taking a big risk."

"Tell you what I'll do; if I see I am going to fail, I will give you notice and you can punch the head off of the fellow before he gets a chance at you."

"What is your plan?"

"Let me unfold it to you: You must make some excuse not to let Ned rub you down again before Friday night. Then you let me into the room first and I will hide there. He will come early to lay his little trap. I will be there, and will unset it. See? And if I fail, I will warn you. If I succeed and it is all right, I will give you a signal that everything is lovely. How will that do?"

"Well, if you are sure you can do it and not make a mess of it."

"Can't you trust me, Buck?"

"Well, yes; but it is a terrible risk, you see. I had a good deal rather punch him; that would be more satisfaction."

"No, it wouldn't. You just wait till I get done with him and see if it would. You will be glad that you left it to me, see if you ain't. I'm not talking through my hat, Buck."

"Well, all right; have it your own way."

"Bully! Now, don't you forget your part of it. Don't let him touch you before Friday night. You can find some excuse."

"Yes, I am boss, far as that goes. And then Friday night you will lay the trap for him. All right, Timmy; I will give you my extra key, and you can place yourself in the room early."

"Then you will want a signal to know that I am there."

"Sure."

"Well, you will find a chair upset right in the middle of the floor—No, that won't do, for Ned would pick it up before you got there. Tell you what, I will put a pencil-cross on the wall just under your looking-glass."

"That will do; he will not see it, or, if he does, it will have no meaning for him."

"Then, to let you know that it is all right, I will meow like a cat."

"He may look for the cat, Timmy."

"If he does he will find it, you bet—a regular screaming wildcat! I will make him think he has found a whole family of cats, and Kilkenny breed at that! But he won't bother his head."

"And what if your plan misses fire?"

"Then I will step right out and accuse him before you, and you can murder him in cold blood if you want to."

"And I would half do it, I can tell you."

But I agree to it all, Timmy, and depend on you. I don't know what your plan is, but I know you know what you are about."

"I think I do!"

"All right; you take care of Stainer and I will take care of Brag when it comes to Saturday night."

While they were talking, another fellow came along and stopped.

He was a young man, maybe twenty, with something of a "slugger" cast of countenance.

This was Fred Gibbins, Brag Clawson's trainer for the forthcoming wrestling match. And he was all that he looked, and maybe a little more besides. His record was not wholesome.

"Hello!" he greeted.

"How do?" responded Buck.

"How do you find yourself?"

"I'm in fine shape, thank you."

"So is Brag. Looks as if it would be about an even thing."

"Yes, that's so. No doubt he will give me something to do to lay him on his back."

"You can make up your mind to that, Bucksey. He laid me over once last night in a little practice, fair and square."

"Then I shall have to look out, sure enough," with a smile. "I will have to tell my friends to hedge a little, I guess. What kind of odds are Brag's backers giving?"

"Well, it is mostly even. You see, they know something about your strength. But we are taking all we can get at that rate. Are you giving any odds yourself? If you are, I can find all the money you can cover."

"Oh, no; we are not sure enough of our game for that, Gibbins. We are only betting even."

That information appeared to satisfy the fellow very much, and he soon traveled on.

Butcher-boy Buck had played a clever card to back up Timmy Keen's lead.

It would not be suspected that they knew anything.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DETECTIVES ON DUTY.

Detectives Reilly and Irwin went promptly to work.

Before Mrs. Claverton had reached her home in New Jersey they were pushing their inquiries.

At the office of Gormer & Peell they ascertained that the young woman had performed all her usual duties of the day two days before, and had left for home at the usual time in the afternoon.

That was something gained, but not much.

"Who was she most intimate with in the office?" inquired Irwin.

"Well, she was about as friendly with Archer as with any one," answered Mr. Peell.

Archer, by the way, was one of the clerks, or assistants, a man well on in years, of meek manner and gentle disposition.

Inquiry of him, however, brought nothing to light. Miss Claverton had appeared in her usual good spirits that day, and had said good-night to him on leaving the office.

What did he know about her?

Almost nothing.

"Who is Mary Farley?" now put in Reilly.

"Why, I have heard Miss Claverton speak of her," admitted Archer. "I think she called here once."

"Know where she is employed?"

"No, sir."

"That is bad. We hoped to find her."

The two detectives consulted for a few minutes, and Reilly took leave, to set out for Valewood, to pick up the thread at that end, and to make some investigation concerning the missing young lady's social acquaintances there.

Irwin remained and entered into a confidential chat with the old clerk, hoping to draw out something that would throw light upon the case in some direction, but he failed.

The disappearance was a mystery.

But the skilled inquisitor was not at all baffled; he entered upon a new track altogether.

New York detectives have more than one string to their fiddles, and when one does not give forth the right sound, they try another.

"Where is Miss Claverton's desk?" the detective inquired.

"There by that window."

"And has she any private drawer in the desk where she keeps her own effects?"

"I think not, sir."

"Look through them all, sir," spoke up Mr. Gormer.

"Thank you; that is what I will do. I may find out something which may serve as a clew."

He advanced to the desk and looked around.

On the top was nothing but some blank paper, a typewriter, a file with shorthand notes speared upon it, and some tablets for note-taking.

A long drawer in the middle contained some of the more common legal forms which the stenographer had been obliged to fill up with the typewriter from time to time as required.

The desk had only three drawers. A small one on the left side contained a screwdriver, some oil, and other things used in connection with the typewriter. The other drawer contained two sizes of envelopes, some red-wafers, rubber bands, stamps, etc.

Not a thing that could be of the least use to the detective in the work he was undertaking.

Under the desk, at the back, was a box for waste paper.

The detective examined that—something no one in the office had thought of.

He drew out the crumpled sheets and scraps, piece by piece, examining every one carefully.

Most of them—in fact, nearly all—were business letters that some freak of the typewriter had spoiled in the writing, or some oversight of the operator had made incorrect.

It occupied him for some time, and when he had done, having emptied the box to the last scrap, he had only three pieces that could be of any use to him in the case in hand, and only one of these with any certainty. He had learned the address of Miss Farley.

A crumpled envelope gave the address in full.

Placing these papers in his pocket, the detective took leave, and as he emerged from the building he came face to face with Timmy Keen.

"You, Weasel?" he greeted.

"Sure, pop!" Timmy responded.

"Well, I want you."

"Glad you do. The chief said maybe you would want to use me. What can I do?"

"Have you found out anything?"

"No; have you?"

"Well, I don't know, yet. I have picked up a clew or two, and I want you to help me work them up."

Timmy's eyes danced with delight, for he felt the importance of being thus confided in by a detective of the regular force, and the height of his ambition was

to get on that force himself, when he got older.

"I'll do it, you bet!" he cried. "That is to say, if it is anything that I can do."

"Oh, it is easy enough. I want you to go and see Miss Farley, that friend of Miss Claverton's. I have got her address."

"All right; I'm your weasel."

"She is employed in the office of Higgs & Roebel, No. — Broadway."

"Kerrect, Salina!"

"Go there and ask her when she saw Miss Claverton last, and inquire about what she knows concerning her private affairs."

"I savvy."

"No need for me to put words into your mouth; you have got a level head. At the same time I will go and look after Mr. Hodgley a little."

"Hodgley! Do you mean Rufus Hodgley?"

"The same. Do you know him?"

"I know who he is, well enough. Runs three or four saloons on the Bowery, and weighs two hundred and sixty pounds. He is the man that's backing Brag Clawson for the match— But you don't care anything about that. What has he got to do with this case?"

"That is what I want to find out, Timmy, and, as you know something about the man already, you may be able to help me a good deal. I will let you into the matter, and then you will know the meaning of anything you may hear that can have any bearing upon the case. You may be able to help us as much here as you did on that other matter."

"Hope so, anyhow; and I hope you will be able to wind it up short, for Jerry's sake."

"Who is Jerry?"

"Policeman down here—full name Jerry McKenna. This missing typewriter is his sweetheart."

"Oh ho! Well, we will do all we can for Jerry, then, if he is one of the finest. Do not fail to get all you can out of Miss Farley, and see, too, if she knows anything about Hodgley."

"You bet! But what about Hodgley?"

"Well, here is a scrap that I found which may connect him with this mystery in some manner. It was written by Miss Claverton on her typewriter, and for some reason was thrown away. May be the beginning of it didn't suit her. No matter as to that."

"What does it say?"

"I mean to let you read it, and then if you pick up anything that seems to hook fast to it anywhere you can let me know."

With that he placed the sheet of paper in Timmy's hands, and the lad read the following, written on one of the letter-head sheets of the firm for whom Miss Claverton worked:

"New York, July 11.

"Rufus Hodgley, No. — Bowery.

"Dear Sir:—It is useless for you to ask, for you already know that I will not do it. If you bother me any more I shall have to report the matter to the police and see if there is not some way to—"

There the writing ended abruptly, and Timmy Keen gave a sniff of disgust that it did not reveal more. It was enough to connect Mr. Hodgley's name with Miss Claverton's interests somehow, provided that the letter had been of her own personal writing."

CHAPTER IX.

TIMMY TAKES A HAND.

That doubt entered the head of the Weasel as he read.

"What do you think of it?" asked the

detective. "What are you studying over?"

Timmy was trying to solve the question for himself. He supposed the detective had asked in the office concerning the point under consideration.

"I was going to say that maybe the letter was not made up by the missing lady at all," he responded. "But I suppose you inquired about that and settled the point. If no one else wrote it, then it stands to reason that it was one of the lady's own."

"I see you are Keen by name and keen by nature. You will grow keener as you grow older. The letter itself explains who wrote it."

Timmy looked at it again in amaze.

"I don't see where or how," he declared. "There is no name to it, and it don't say it was hers."

"You must read between the lines, my lad. The composition is that of a woman, unmistakably. Do you suppose those sharky lawyers would begin a letter in that way?"

"Never thought of that."

"You will have to learn all those little points, if you are going to fit yourself for this line of work."

"It looks as if I have got a thing or two to learn, sure enough. But, if you can read the signs like that, why did she throw the letter away? It reads all right as far as I can see."

"That is of no moment, as I told you. The beginning may not have suited her, but I suspect that she changed her mind about sending it on one of the lawyer's letter-heads. But we must drop all that. What I want you to do is to keep your eyes and ears open."

"You needn't tell me to do that, for they are propped wide open for anything that comes within range."

"Well, here is just one more scrap, and I will let you go. Here is another letter addressed and commenced, but thrown away. You may read this one, also, for you may get hold of a thread by knowing what is wanted."

Timmy took it and read:

"New York, July 11.

"Daniel Channing, Esq.,

"Valewood, New Jersey.

"Dear Sir:—I must see you to-morrow evening when I come in from the city. If you can possibly wait at your office, do so. It is something—"

But there that letter stopped, like the other, most provokingly, and the lad stamped his foot in disappointment.

"Why the mischief didn't she add a line or two more before she threw it away? And why did she throw it away, anyhow? There is nothing the matter with it as I can see."

"I think she decided not to write it. Now, that is all, and you may as well be off to see Mary Farley."

"All right; where shall I meet you?"

"Say at Chopsey's restaurant in half an hour—no, make it an hour."

"Kerrect, Salina; I will be there, and I hope I will have a pocketful of clues for you."

With that, Timmy waved his hand in a sprightly manner and went off to perform the errand, and as he went he sang cheerfully to his one familiar tune:

"Oh! when I am a copper,
In regulation blue,
I'll keep my eyes wide open,
And be to duty true:
I'll make the fakir hustle,
The bums get up and get;
There'll be no monkey business
When I'm around, you bet!"

He was still singing when he passed the next corner, and when he had gone by a policeman stepped out into sight from be-

hind a pillar, looking after the boy with an expression of commingled emotions.

It was Jerry McKenna.

Timmy did not see him, but hastened on his way, composing and singing as he went, and he kept it up until he came to his destination.

A glance at the directory showed him where the office of Higgs & Roebel was, and mounting the stairs three steps at a time—elevators were too slow for him—he soon entered.

He looked around at once for the lady typewriter, and espied her.

"Who do you want to see?" asked a boy, coming forward.

"Miss Farley," answered the Weasel.

He spoke the name loudly enough for the young lady to hear him, and she looked up quickly.

She immediately dropped her work and came forward to the railing that kept, or was supposed to keep, the plebeian visitor at bay, and inquired what was wanted of her.

"Can you tell me where Julia Claverton is, to-day?" asked Timmy.

"Why, no; what is the matter?"

"She isn't at the office, and I thought you might know where she is."

"No, I have not seen her; she must be at home, if she has not come in. I do not know anything about her."

"When did you see her last?"

"It must be a couple of weeks since I have seen her."

"Well, the fact of the business is, she is missing, and no one knows where she can be."

"Mercy! Is it possible? But have you sent to see if she is at home? She may be sick. And how did you know that I know her? Who are you, anyway? Who sent you?"

"She is not at home, and hasn't been there since day before yesterday morning. Her mother has been looking for her. As to who I am, I am one of the finest—that is to say, I will be some day; I am helping the police to hunt her up. We got hold of your address."

"Goodness! You have quite alarmed me. No, I do not know anything about her; I only wish I did."

"What can you tell me about her?"

"She is one of the sweetest girls that ever lived."

"You are not the only one that thinks so; but that is not what I mean."

"What do you mean, then?"

"I mean, do you know anything that can explain the mystery and put us on track of her?"

"No, no; I do not!"

"She left the office to go home that night at the regular time, and that was the last that was seen of her."

"It is strange, very strange. Perhaps some accident happened to her, and she has been taken to some hospital—"

"The police have already looked up that," interrupted Timmy. "She is sure enough missing, and what we are after is to get a clew that will put us in the way of finding her."

"I wish I could give it to you."

"Well, maybe you can. I am not done yet. Can you think of any danger she was looking out for?"

"Why, no. I never heard a word of anything of the kind from her lips. She seemed as free and happy as a bird, and I really believe she was. I am sure some accident has happened."

"Something has happened, as sure as you live. Ever hear her say anything about a Mr. Hodgley?"

"Never."

"Do you know any one by that name?"

"No."

"Then it is plain you cannot help us

much, unless you can give me the names of more of her acquaintances here in the city."

"I hardly know one that I can think of."

"That settles it, then. I shall have to go back and report that you know nothing about her, and we'll have to scare our cats around some other alley to get on the track."

"But will you not let me know if you find her?"

"Yes, I will do that if you will let me know right away if you hear anything that can help us."

That was quickly agreed to, and they exchanged addresses. Then, as soon as that had been done, Timmy further inquired:

"By the way, did you ever hear her say anything about a policeman who is rather stuck on her? Maybe she has told you about that, as you are friendly with her."

"Yes, that is so; she has mentioned him to me; but she seemed to think highly of him, and it cannot be possible that he has had anything to do with her disappearance."

CHAPTER X.

THE BOWERY WRESTLER.

Timmy Keen felt elated; that last bit of information made him feel so.

He was glad, for Jerry's sake, that the young lady seemed to think highly of him, the honest policeman.

Assuring Miss Farley that no suspicion could possibly attach to Jerry, and that he was concerned as much as the young lady's own mother for her safety, the lad took leave.

He had about time enough for a chat with Jerry before going to keep his appointment with the detective; accordingly he set out to find him.

Well acquainted with Jerry's beat, he had little trouble in locating him, and he approached him singing, pretending not to see him until almost upon him.

"Hello! here you are?" he cried.

"And here you are, too, by the sound of you," responded Jerry.

"Can't help singing, Jerry, if that is what you mean. I have something to sing about, you see."

"Yes, I know what you are singing about, my boy, and who you are singing about, too. I'll be glad when you see fit to let up on it. If you only knew what utter nonsense—"

"And it isn't every fellow can utter even that, Jerry. But I have a bit of good news for—"

"You have found her? That is the only good news I want, just now."

"Well, that will come, later on, I hope. I have found something else almost as good."

"What is it?"

"I have found out that she likes you."

"You are giving me stuff now, Timmy; I know you."

"No, honor bright; I have seen Miss Farley, and she said so."

Needless to say, Jerry was interested, and Timmy had to repeat every word of what had been said.

"That makes me all the more determined to find her," the policeman declared. "By the way, I have got word that I can be off; the roundsman just now told me. I guess it is from headquarters, too."

"Not a doubt of it, for the boss knows that you will do your level best to find her."

"I would give my life for her!"

"And that means that you will win, sure pop! Well, I must jog along, for I have an appointment to keep. See you later, Jerry."

And on he went, striking up his tune and reeling off another verse of his nonsense—too nonsensical, perhaps, to be repeated here. Still, the reader may be able to stand it:

"I want to be a copper,
And then a roundsman bold,
And after that a sergeant,
Before I get too old;
Then I would be a captain,
And with the captains rank,
My name high on the pay roll,
And money in the bank!"

Jerry listened, then shook his head dismally and sauntered off in the opposite direction, now eager for release from duty, in order to enter personally into the search for the missing girl.

When Timmy reached the restaurant he found the detective there awaiting him, and was quickly asked:

"What luck, Timmy?"

"No good," the lad answered. "She don't know a thing about her, and is now in as big a stew as the rest of us. What about Hodgley?"

"Not able to find him. Has not been seen for a couple of days. I am going to put you on his track now, while I run out to Valewood and take up the trail with my partner on the case."

"Goin' to leave me here to be gobbled by the big sharks in the pond while you tackle the little ones?"

Said so earnestly that the detective had to smile.

"No fear of anybody's gobbling you, I guess," he remarked. "They would find they had tackled a hornet before they got you down, I think. But, you can do it, can't you—spot Hodgley?"

"You bet I can."

"Then go ahead and do your level best, Weasel. I must interview that man Channing, for if the young lady has seen him he may be able to solve the whole puzzle."

"Yes, that's so. But, say, I want some way of opening the business with Hodgley."

"I leave that all to you; you are cute enough for it."

"Yes; but I want means."

"What do you mean?"

"I'll tell you: There is soon to be a wrestling match between two fellows, Butcher-boy Buck and Brag Clawson, and Rufus Hodgley is the man who is backing Bowery Brag. I am for Buck, tooth and nail, and if I had a fiver to shake under Hodgley's nose—"

"I see; and here you are. It is worth the money to get you started with him, for you will worm something out of him."

"I'll take it as a loan," said Timmy. "When I get done I will have five for you and another for myself."

"You seem to have great confidence in your butcher-boy."

"Bet your life I have."

So the detective placed five dollars in the Weasel's hands, and hastened to one of the principal ferries, for he had just about time to catch the next train out to Valewood.

Timmy proceeded upon his mission, but first proposed to find Brag Clawson. Through him he hoped to be able to get on track of Hodgley.

He found Brag in one of Hodgley's Bowery saloons.

The fellow was alone and disengaged, and was idly looking at the pictures in a sporting newspaper.

The Weasel diplomatically allowed the fellow to discover him, in order to lead him to believe that he had not come searching for him, and this Clawson presently did.

He called out:

"Hello, Weasel!"

Timmy looked around, surprised.

"Oh! is it you?" he asked, advancing.

"Yes; and what are you doing here? Spying?"

"No; I am not spying. You and Gibbins seem to think I am trying to find a mare's nest somewheres, don't you?"

"That is all you are likely to find, if you find anything, I can tell you. And if you carry any more news to Buck, you are likely to find something that you deserve."

"Thanks, awfully! But I didn't come here to quarrel, so I will draw out and leave you alone. I stepped in to look for a man."

"What man?"

"Mebbe you will think I am spying again if I tell you."

"Wouldn't wonder a bit, for I have that suspicion of you, anyhow; you are playing sucker to the police lately."

"That's all right. I want to pick up what I can, for I mean to be a policeman myself, some day. I was looking around to find Mr. Hodgley, but he don't seem to be in sight."

"You won't find him. He is out of town."

"No use looking for him then. Do you know when he will be back?"

"In time for the match, sure. He said so when he went away. But, if you have got a hundred or so to put up, I can tell you where to reach him."

"That is the very business I want to see him about—to arrange a bet. I know a man who has got a mint of money"—which was no untruth. "Where can we get at him?"

"Well, he is down at Bay Beach, if you must know. Don't know as there is any secret about it. He will cover any amount you can raise."

"All right. I'll give him a chance, you bet!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE WEASEL WIDE AWAKE.

The Weasel felt exuberant. He had done a clever stroke of work.

The next thing was to strike the trail of Hodgley and discover what he was doing.

He must find Jerry before he got off duty, too, and post him on what he had discovered. Perhaps Jerry could take a run down to Bay Beach with him. At any rate, one would have to go.

"But how are you betting?" the Bowery wrestler demanded.

"Why, even," answered Timmy. "We can't offer any odds."

"How is that? I heard that some of Buck's backers were giving odds."

"I ain't. You see, we are not sure of anything. I say this in private."

"Of course."

"We hear that you are in mighty good form for it."

"Yes, I am. I have tried to put myself in the best shape, and mean to win the match or die."

"Which means that Buck will have to hump himself to get there, I should say. And he can't train again before Friday night, either."

"How is that?"

"Oh, something has turned up so he can't do it; he didn't tell me what it was."

"That is bad for him. Stainer told my man that he was getting Buck right up in shape, too. He will have to look out, and you can tell him so if you want to. But don't tell him anything that ain't so."

"Don't know that I have ever done that."

"I can't swear to it. Anyhow, don't you let Gibbins get hold of you."

"Oh, I am not afraid of Gibbins. He wouldn't hurt a little feller like me, I know. Well, ta-ta, Bragsey!"

"So long, little Weasel! If you have got

any spare change you had better hedge, if you have been betting on Buck, for I tell you I am in it to win. I am going to be champion."

"Well, go in and win!"

Timmy left the place and hastened up the street, yet, with due caution, looking back to see if any one was shadowing him.

At first he discerned no one, but presently, looking around suddenly again, he detected Stainer, who instantly dodged behind a huge pole to escape the Weasel's observation.

"Ha! He is following me, is he?" thought the Weasel. "Wants to see where I will go. If I go near Buck he will think I came spying, and if I go straight to the policeman it may spoil my game."

He thought for a minute, and resolved to go back and face his enemy.

Stopping suddenly, he acted as if he had lost something, and retraced his steps, scanning the pavement, but having an eye out for Stainer, of course, to quickly discover that the fellow was watching him.

Timmy went on, and Stainer stepped out to meet him.

The Weasel pretended not to see him until spoken to. Then he looked up in much surprise.

"What have you lost?" Stainer demanded.

"Hello! Didn't see a quarter anywhere along here, did you?" asked the boy backer.

"Nary a quarter. How many seconds do you suppose a quarter would remain lying here on the sidewalk?"

"Well, not many, that's a fact. Guess I might as well give it up. But, which way are you going? Have you seen Buck since this morning?"

"No; why?"

"Guess he wants to see you."

"What for? Have you been carrying some more lies?"

"If it wasn't that Buck needs you I would paste a spot on your nose for that."

"You would? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, I would."

"Why, you might as well speak for your coffin if you ever try that!"

"Then don't you call me a liar, that is all. I have told no lies; that is not in my line."

"Well, what does Buck want, then?"

"You had better go and see."

"If he is on his ear about anything, I will know you have been doing something and I will just about flay the life out of you."

"You are too mighty suspicious, you are. Go and see what he wants, and do your flaying afterward. But don't forget that I will be in it as you go along, old fellow!"

"I have a notion to—"

"Well, change your notion, then. Something has turned up so that Buck can't train to-night, and you had better go and see him."

"Whew! Why didn't you say so right out, then?"

"You kept buzzing so I couldn't say what I wanted to get at. This is goin' to give Bowery Brag an advantage, I am afraid."

"So am I. I must go and see Buck right off and get him to change his mind, if I can. It must be something that he can't avoid, or he would never miss his training."

"That is so. But, say, Stainer."

"What is it?"

"You will pull him through if you can, won't you?"

"Sure I will! What do you take me for? He has got to win this match if it is in the wood!"

"I think he said he would be ready to

train again Friday night, and you must put him in the very best condition you can. We trust everything to you, Stainer."

This had the effect to throw the rascally trainer off his guard.

He could entertain no suspicion, in the face of that, that Timmy or Buck had any misgivings against him.

Stainer at once started for the place where Buck was employed.

Timmy watched him until there was no doubt of his intention.

That settled him, for the time being, so far as spying on the movements of the Weasel was concerned.

"And now for Jerry," decided the street scout as he set forward; "and if we don't make things hum before we get done, I am no hummer!"

He was not long in finding Jerry.

As he approached the officer he began singing another verse, even more nonsensical than anything he had yet perpetrated.

Jerry stopped the moment he heard the tune strike up, knowing what was coming and who was coming with it, and when Timmy came up he eyed the lad pityingly, and said:

"Timmy, it is softening of the brain you are getting?"

"Maybe it is," said Timmy, pleasantly. "How was that one, Jerry? You are a good judge of bad cigars, if nothing else."

"It was the worst I ever heard, on my soul it was!" declared the policeman, earnestly. "I hope you will never be guilty of making another rhyme while you live, my lad."

"Well, when I get to be a policeman like you I will stop, for then I will be on my dignity. But, say, Jerry! I have got hold of something more."

"Ha! it is the imp you are at spying out things. What is it?"

"I know where Rufus Hodgley is. He is down at Bay Beach. I am going there to spot him."

"Is that so? Timmy, instead of a policeman it is a detective you should aim to be! I will go down there with you, and if we find that the villain has had anything to do with the disappearance—"

"We'll pulverize him, eh? You bet we will, Jerry!"

"Worse than that, Timmy."

CHAPTER XII.

TIMMY AND JERRY JOIN HANDS.

Timmy explained the whole matter, and the officer listened with more than interest, for if it concerned any one it concerned him.

"We will go down there as soon as I get off duty, Timmy, boy," he determined, "and I hope the time will quickly come around. Every minute seems an hour, on my word it does!"

"Don't wonder, Jerry. I have never been in love myself, but I can imagine something about it. I once knew an Irish cook that fell in love with a policeman, and it had such an effect on her mind that she cooked a beefsteak in the coffee pot and the coffee in the soup kettle."

"Let's have no nonsense, Timmy; I am in no mood for it," censured the policeman.

"All right, Jerry. I will respect your feelings."

"Do you know what time the next boat leaves?"

"For Bay Beach—four o'clock."

"I will go on that boat. Meet me at the dock, if we are to go together."

"I will be there, sure as my name isn't Dennis," the lad promised. "I am into this thing clear to the top tips of my ears!"

"And that skunk of a Hodgley will be in it deeper than that if we get him dead to

rights. God grant that nothing has happened to the young lady, for it would—would kill her mother."

"We'll soon size him up, Jerry."

They parted for the time being, and Timmy went off singing:

"I want to be a copper,
And with the coppers march,
With padding in my shoulders,
And collar full of starch;
I'd pose for an Apollo
With grace and dignity,
And e'en the gutter hoodlums
Would show respect to me!"

He could not help it. It was bubbling within and had to come out. And it was fun to tease Jerry in this harmless way.

Timmy had taken no dinner as yet that day, so he now sought a cheap restaurant—"five full courses for a quarter"—and having disposed of the said "layout," went around for a last word with Buck, to find him at the stall.

"Was Stainer here?" Timmy inquired.

"Yes, he was here."

"What kind of feather was he in?"

"The best. You must have oiled him, didn't you?"

"I plastered him a little, so he would rub down easy, that was all."

"Well, you fixed him, however you did it. He was as nice as pie, and almost cried because I couldn't train."

"And because he couldn't get the chance to dose you, of course. How did you put him off without letting him smell a mouse?"

"Told him my sister's baby had died—it died about a year ago."

"Ha, ha! Well, that was a good one."

"It filled the gap."

"Well, I have got to go down to Bay Beach on business, Buck, but I will be back again all in good time for our little scheme, you bet."

"If you are not, the worse for Stainer, for I will stain him in a worse manner than you intend doing, I don't doubt. He will get it without mercy at my hands, I tell you."

"I'll be here, never fear."

Timmy then hastened to the dock from which the Bay Beach boats steamed.

Jerry was awaiting him, now in citizen's dress.

"I see you didn't fail, my boy," Jerry greeted.

"You mean it is the first time I have failed," Timmy disputed.

"Failed how?"

"To sing for you. If you want—"

"For mercy's sake, Timmy, don't disgrace yourself here!"

"Well, I will spare your feelings this time, Jerry. Business before pleasure, you know."

"I have been thinking, Timmy, that there is one thing in our way. We both know this jigger Hodgley by sight, and he knows us, so he will spot us as soon as we spot him."

"That is all right; he won't know what has brought us there, and he can't suspect that you know anything about the young lady."

"He would be wrong if he did, Timmy."

"Allow a Dutchman to speak twice. I mean, that he can't suspect that you suspect that he knows anything about her, even if he does, which we have got to prove yet."

"You make it as clear as mud."

"Well, wait till it settles, then, and you will see the bottom all right."

Their jesting soon ceased, however, and they found a quiet nook on the boat where they sat down and talked the matter over earnestly.

"I can't see what Hodgley can have had to do with her," Jerry declared.

"No, nor I," answered Timmy; "but there is that letter she had started to write

to him; that is a sure-enough sign that he is in it in some way."

"And then there is that man at Valewood you told me about."

"Mr. Channing? Well, the detectives have gone out to see him, so we need not concern ourselves with that."

"I know; but I can't help thinking about him. I take it he is a friend of Miss Claverton's, don't you?"

"Oh, yes; sure."

And so they discoursed on the way, and when landed at the Beach sauntered up to the leading hotel, where they had the good luck to espy their man almost immediately.

"There he is!" exclaimed the sharp-eyed boy spotter.

"I see him, my lad!" returned Jerry.

They had arranged their plans not to notice the man at first, but to give him time to accost them if he wanted to.

Rufus Hodgley was not to be mistaken. He was a very large man, almost completely filling the big chair in which he sat. His arm was about as thick as the average man's leg.

He had a smooth-shaved face, with strong features of a not over prepossessing type. His nose revealed an avaricious, passionate temperament, and a character astute, grasping, determined and unscrupulous. His lips were thick and protruding, and, all together, he was not one to win confidence of even a novice in physiognomy.

"He is a bad-looker," decided Timmy.

"You are right he is, my lad," agreed Jerry.

"I have always felt shy of him; I wouldn't dare joke with him. I don't see how the mosquitoes down here dare to bite him!"

"How do you know they do, Timmy?"

"I see he has got a fan to keep them off with. They say he owns this hotel; wonder if it is so?"

"Maybe it is. He has got rich on what has emptied other men's pockets and rotted their stomachs, starved their children and sent their wives and daughters out beggars! By Heavens! I have seen enough of it to almost make me a Prohibitionist, Timmy."

This passingly, as they sauntered along, and they had not gone far when they heard the man call the officer by name, at which they turned with the utmost innocence, to learn who had accosted them

CHAPTER XIII.

EVENTS AT VALEWOOD.

Meantime, what of the detectives?

The first to reach Valewood had gone immediately to see Mrs. Claverton.

She was at home in her neat cottage, with three other children, the youngest of whom was twelve.

She was a widow, as we have stated, but owned her little country home, and Julia had been for some five years almost the main prop of her family of five.

Two other daughters were now working, however. The youngest of the four was a boy.

The detective found them all at home, and a sad-enough company they were. The mother and daughters had been weeping until their eyes were red.

Reilly made himself known, and inquired if anything further had developed in the case, and being told that nothing had, made inquiries that would give him some knowledge of the locality and people.

Asking the family not to mention who he was, he left the cottage and went to the principal business street of the town.

There he entered a big store.

"Is Mr. Paul Clayman employed here?" he inquired.

"He is, sir," was the response, "but he is just now away on his vacation."

"Too bad, for I wanted to see him. When did his vacation begin? Do you know where he is spending it?"

"A friend of yours?"

"I wanted to see him on a matter of business. I suppose I can write him, if I can get his address."

"Well, he went away the day before yesterday, and I believe he went first to New York. There he was to meet a friend, and I am under the impression that he intended going to Washington."

"Then you cannot give me his definite address?"

"Unfortunately, I cannot."

"His permanent home is here, in Valewood?"

"Oh, yes."

"Can you direct me to it? No doubt I can get the address from his family."

"Why, sure enough, so you can. Go up the street this way, cross two and turn up the third to your left. The fifth house on the right is the one you want to find."

"Thank you, sir."

The detective was polished and polite, and had received every courtesy.

Following the directions, he soon came to a neat country village home, and rang the bell.

"Is Mr. Paul Clayman at home?" he inquired.

"He is not, sir," the reply.

"Then I have missed him. Is it possible that I have made a mistake in the date? Was he not to go to New York to-morrow?"

"No; the day before yesterday. You certainly have made a mistake in the date. But he did not say that he was expecting any one, sir. May I ask who you are, sir?"

The person was evidently the young man's mother.

"My name is Reilly," was the answer. "He had really no reason to expect me, that is true. Do you think I shall have time to see him in New York before he goes on to Washington?"

"I am afraid not, sir; he was to leave New York this afternoon. Still, you may be able to meet him, I cannot tell, not knowing the hour of his departure."

"I will try it, anyhow. Will you please give me his address?"

"He is at the — Hotel."

"And in Washington— But that is not necessary, for if I miss him in New York— Still, I can drop him a line."

"At Willard's, sir."

"Ah! That will do excellently. Too bad that I missed the date. However, I can send my congratulations along after him."

"Your congratulations?" in astonishment.

"Is it possible that—"

The detective paused purposely, an old trick to get a cue.

"Do you intimate that he has gone off to get married? I never thought of it!"

"Then I have spoiled a future surprise for you, I have no doubt. But, of course, you can readily guess who the happy bride is, and so you can turn the tables upon him."

"How, sir?"

"By preparing a welcome for him, and— But, to be fair with you, madam, I am not sure that my suspicion is correct."

"Ah! then he had not told you such was his intention?"

"No, not absolutely."

"Then I am sure you are mistaken, sir, for Paul would never cheat his mother in that manner. If you are a school companion of his, perhaps it is a hoax. He has often told us what great—"

"You may be entirely right, madam. Still, there is a circumstance I have learned which favors the idea that he has gone and done it, as the boys say—pardon the parlance, madam. A certain young lady of this village has been missing from her home since the day before yesterday, and putting the two circumstances together—"

"Who is it?" eagerly.

"I believe her name is Claverton," replied the detective.

"Julia Claverton?"

"I believe that is the full name."

"Mercy me! Can it be possible? I would never have suspected it of Julia, on my word."

By this time two grown daughters had made their appearance, and the wonder and amazement upon the three faces would have made any one but a detective smile. He kept his features immobile, however.

"Still, since you can neither deny nor confirm the suspicion, madam, we may look upon it as among the possibilities, I suppose. I understand that there has been something of an attachment between them."

"There was something of the kind, sir, but I thought it had been broken off some time ago."

"Well, time will tell, of course. Permit me to say good-day!"

He lifted his hat with Chesterfieldian politeness and was about to turn away when the mother asked:

"But, your name again, sir? Who did you say you are?"

"Reilly, madam, Howard Reilly."

"And may I ask a favor of you?"

"Certainly, madam."

"Will you drop me a line from New York and let me know the truth about it? I shall be more than anxious to know, and if it is true, of course Paul will keep it secret until his return."

"It will give me pleasure to do so, madam."

The detective took leave.

He had made a good stroke, and felt well repaid for his trip out to the little village.

Having all the information he could hope to gain, he proceeded to the railway station to ascertain what time he could get a train in to the city, and while he was waiting his comrade arrived.

They shook hands.

"What luck?" Irwin asked.

"First-rate," the response, and the points were briefly given.

"Well, it looks like a plain case," Irwin commented, "but I know, and so do you, that plain cases are not always to be trusted."

"That is so, Phil. But, what has brought you out here? That is of more interest to me now than the main part of the case. What have you discovered since we parted?"

Irwin briefly told about the finding of the unfinished letter bearing the name of Mr. Channing.

Together they left the station to pay that gentleman a visit.

Inquiry revealed that he was a lawyer, considered the best in the county, and he was found in his office.

He had received no letter from the young lady, but she had called upon him in person some days before to make inquiry concerning a certain clause in her father's will.

To the lawyer the detectives had to reveal their identity and purpose before he would deal with them. He now proceeded and gave them some interesting information concerning the young lady, something of which even she herself had had but scant previous knowledge.

CHAPTER XIV. THE WEASEL'S BIG INNING.

When Jerry McKenna and Timmy Keen looked around at the call, Mr. Hodgley motioned to them, and both "pleasure seekers" returned to where he was seated fanning himself. The big man held out his hand to the policeman, saying:

"How do, Jerry? What brings you down here? This your day off? How do, boy? You are the chap that is the friend of Buck Gallagher, ain't you?"

So he greeted both at the same time, but looked for Jerry to reply first, evidently.

"Yes, I am off for a few days, Mr. Hodgley," Jerry responded.

He was eager to demand right out whether or not the man knew anything about Miss Claverton, but he had to curb his impatience and play his role.

"And I'm Buck's friend, you bet!" Timmy assured.

"Thought I knew you. What is the latest news concerning the match? Anything interesting?"

"Well, Buck has had to give up training for a day or two," announced Timmy, soberly. "His sister's baby is dead. He won't train before Friday night."

"Then I guess it will be a sure thing for the Bowery Wrestler, won't it? What is the general opinion in the city? I am not posted, away out here, and this affair gets no mention in the papers."

"Brag thinks sure he'll win, sir."

"And what do you think about it?"

"I have got a five-dollar bill here that says he won't."

The big man smiled disdainfully.

"You had better keep it in your pocket," he advised. "Your judgment is not worth much."

"It is good for this five dollars, if you dare cover it, sir," Timmy averred, fearlessly. "We'll put the stakes in Jerry's hands, if that is all the same to you. What say?"

Timmy coolness and business-like manner interested the man.

"Well, I will take it, if you put it that way," he said. "Here, Jerry, you hold the money, and give it to me after the match is over. This will teach you a lesson, boy. My advice is, don't bet, and if you do, remember that nothing is so uncertain as certain things."

"That is all right," assured Timmy. "If I lose I sha'n't squeal."

"But, what has brought you here together?" the man then asked of Jerry.

"I know the boy," Jerry answered, "and, meeting him on the pier, I asked him to come with me for a sail."

"Oh, I see. Well, you could not have come to a finer place, I assure you. It was so infernal warm in the city that I had to run out here to keep from melting. I hope it will get cooler."

"So do I, before Saturday night," added Timmy. "Don't want any sizzling weather then."

"Are you here alone?" asked Jerry.

"Yes, all alone."

"Well, we'll saunter on, boy," said Jerry. "Glad we have seen you, sir," to Hodgley.

"No, don't go! Sit down here," invited the sport rum-dealer. "Let me order you something to drink, and we'll have a chat."

"Thanks, sir, but I don't drink."

"Not drink? Ha, ha, ha! You needn't be afraid of me, Jerry; I wouldn't give it away."

"It is the fact, sir. I don't touch anything."

"But you smoke?"

"Yes."

"Sit down, then, and smoke. It will do you more good than tramping around the grounds. You, boy?"

"No, thank you," refusing the cigar.

"And, Mr. Hodgley, are you the same Hodgley that owns the saloons on the Bowery?"

"Yes; why do you ask that?"

The game was now open.

"Because I saw a fellow who was looking for you, and he seemed to want to find you pretty bad."

"Wanted to find me? Who was he?"

"I didn't ask him his name. He had a part of a letter that was addressed to you, and for some reason he wanted to find you quick."

"Who was he—that is, what kind of a man was he?"

Timmy rattled off a pretty fair description of the detective, but took care not to mention what he knew about him.

"That is queer," mused the man. "Of course you did not see the part of the letter, so that you can't tell me anything about that?"

"I can tell you all about it, for I read it."

"What was it?"

"Well, it was no funeral of mine, sir, and I didn't try hard to put it on my mind, but maybe I can think of it. There was a name, something like Claverly, Claverling—"

"Claverton?"

"That was it, for rocks!" exclaimed Timmy.

"Well, what did she have to say—that is, if it was a she?" he caught himself up.

Both were watching him closely, without appearing really to be doing so, and both noticed that he had changed color slightly. They knew they were on the right track.

"It was a she hard and fast enough," Timmy assured. "Her front name was Julia. She said something about its being useless for you to ask something or other, for she wouldn't agree to it. Then went on to say that if you bothered—"

"There! there! That will do! That will do!" the man interrupted, as he thrust his thumb and forefinger into his capacious vest pocket and drew out a bill, offering it to Timmy. "Just have good sense enough to keep your moth shut about that little billet-doux."

"I don't want your money, sir," Timmy protested, drawing back. "I won't let it out, though, if you want it kept tight. Thought maybe it was something you would like to know, and so I mentioned it."

"Yes, I know all about it, my lad. An infernal piece of blackmail. I don't understand about that letter, though."

He felt in his inside coat pocket, and drew out some letters.

"No, hang me if I understand it!" he cried. "Here is the very letter now; I thought I must have lost it. Boy, I would give you twenty-five dollars if you could tell me who that man is."

"Sorry, sir, but it is past finding out now, I suppose."

"I don't know about that. You are a smart young rat, and you may be able to find him again. Do it if you can, and if you can get that letter for me I will give you fifty."

"I'm your weasel!" cried Timmy. "Not that I promise I'll do it, but I will hunt for the man lively enough."

And certainly he meant to!

"Maybe you can do more than that for the gentleman, Timmy," suggested the policeman.

"What's that?"

"Maybe you can give the man a steer, one way or another, just as it will best suit him."

"That is a good suggestion, Jerry," admitted Hodgley. "But I don't hardly see how to make use of it. No, just find out who the man is, and what he wants about the letter, if you can."

"All right, boss."

"Maybe you could send him on a blind hunt—"

"Only tell me how, sir, if you want it that way. All the same to me."

"Well, tell him you know I have gone up to the mountains; that will put him off the track."

"I'll fix it, you bet!"

"And don't forget the reward, and what it is for."

"You bet I won't. Jerry, I have got to leave ye; I must get back to the city now."

"Well, go ahead," answered the policeman, as if the matter had no interest for him. "I will stay here a while, and will return to the city in the evening. Hope you enjoyed the sail."

"Oh, immense!" the lad exclaimed. And then rattling away for a moment in his cheery fashion, he went off singing:

"I want to be a copper,
And live a life of ease.
Just walk around and see things—
Do anything I please.
I'd be a little emperor,
Upon a little throne,
And you would think the city
Was all my very own!"

CHAPTER XV.

TIMMY TURNS THE TABLES.

Timmy hated to do it; he disliked to give up the case at that end; it would have been his delight to shadow Rufus Hodgley and bring him to time.

But, the way the matter had shaped itself, there was nothing for him to do but make believe he was after the offered reward.

He had already done a clever stroke, and now by carrying the deception further he was leaving the field open for Jerry to get in another lick, so to say, in good order.

There could be no question, now, but that Hodgley had had something to do with the disappearance of the young lady!

"Well, I hope Jerry will get to the bottom of it," Timmy said to himself, as he went on board the boat. "The only thing I am afraid of is that his regard for the girl will make him impatient."

It seemed to the boy as if the boat would never get to the city.

He was impatient to report to the two detectives, for he knew that he had the best of the game, or thought he had, which meant the same with him.

The detectives, meantime, had returned to New York, and had gone direct to the Hotel to learn something about Clayman. Yes, he had been there, but had gone away.

"Was he alone?"

"No, he had a bride with him," informed the clerk.

"Can you describe her?" asked one of the detectives.

"The clerk did so, and the description seemed to tally with the missing Miss Claverton."

"Now, did you hear him call her by her first name?" asked the other.

"Yes, but hang me if I recall what it was," said the clerk.

"Was it Mary, Maggie, Julia, Susan?"

"Can't tell you now, sir. Might have been any one of them."

That seemed to be the end of that trail. They had learned something, but not enough.

It was decided to telegraph to the police at Washington and await answer from them when the bridal couple reached there, and that was done.

The two had not yet separated, when Timmy Keen found them.

"Hello, Weasel! Here you are, eh?"

"You bet! And I have got the big pig by the ear, too! If he don't squeal pretty soon you can kick me."

"Why, what do you mean, boy? Do

"You think you have got upon the track of some one who knows where Miss Claverton is? We have got fair proof that she is married."

"The mischief!"

"Have you proof to the contrary?"

"Well, I think I have, and I guess you will say so, too."

They urged him for his story, and when they had heard it they agreed that he was right.

"We had not much faith in the theory that she had married Clayman," said one of them. "She was not the kind of girl to go off and leave her mother to worry about her."

"And you have done a prize stroke of work, Timmy," complimented the other.

"Done nothin'," cried the lad. "If I had found the young lady, then you might say so, but as it is—what are you going to do?"

"We are going straight to Bay Beach, and we will not let up on Hodgley a moment until we find out where the young lady is. We will find her, if it takes a week."

"Then you are sure he knows?"

"Not a doubt of it."

"Pitch in, then, and find her, and save Jerry from an early grave."

They laughed, and, taking leave of the Weasel, went to prepare for the work before them.

Timmy returned to the dock, where he patiently awaited the coming of the policeman, and, finally, on a late boat, Jerry appeared, his face long and his eyes hungry.

The boy would have sung a verse, but he mercifully spared him the infliction at that time.

"What luck, Jerry?" he asked.

"No luck at all," was the sad reply.

"You saw the detectives?"

"One of them, but I wouldn't have known him from Adam if he had not made himself known. He told me they had come to take charge of Mr. Hodgley, and advised me to come back."

"You might as well, for detective work is not in your line, nor in mine either, for that matter. Those two will land him, you bet!"

"But, where is my dar—Mrs. Claverton's daughter, meanwhile?"

"Safe enough, I imagine."

"What have you heard, that you can say that?"

"The detectives have found out something; they didn't tell me all, but they think it is the girl's signature the rascal wants."

"Then why don't she give it and free herself? Timmy, you can have no idea the worry this thing is giving—giving her poor mother. For her sake we ought to be doing all we can."

"That is what we have done, Jerry. It now rests with the regular detectives to finish the game."

"And must we be idle till that time? I can't, Timmy! I can't!"

They were on their way to Jerry's boarding house, the policeman having invited the lad to spend the night with him.

In order to take the officer's mind off the one thought, Timmy related all the particulars of the forthcoming wrestling match, and the plot and counterplot involved.

The result was Jerry took an active interest in that, and the time did not hang so heavily.

Thursday passed, and Friday, and that afternoon Jerry heard from one of the detectives.

It was just a note, but it gave him hope. It said:

"Girl all right. On track."

Jerry and his young friend had been at

work, too, but with no success, being practically out of it for the time.

If out of that, however, Timmy was not out of the wrestling match, by any means, and when Friday afternoon came round he applied to Butcher-boy Buck for the key of the room where he trained.

"Now, don't you make any mess of it," Buck cautioned.

"You trust me for that," reassured the backer.

"That is what I am going to do, and don't you forget the plans we have arranged. If you do, I shall take the thing into my own hands and make it warm for Stainer. I'll stain him for a certainty!"

"I won't forget. You keep right on playing with him as if you know nothing about it, and we will foolish him so that he won't know which side his hair parts on. There will be a high old time when it comes to a focus, you can bet on that!"

So the Weasel repaired to the room.

He had plenty of time, for Stainer could not get there under an hour or more.

Looking well around, taking in everything, Timmy found a place to conceal himself where discovery was not likely, and when he heard Stainer coming he got out of sight.

The trainer entered and busied himself immediately. He got things in readiness for the work of the evening, and that done, he prepared his scheme. Taking the little bottle from his pocket, he poured its contents upon one of the sponges and laid it in a certain place.

He had other sponges handy, for his own use and use upon the man in training. These he arranged close to hand, and, as the weather was warm, he made use of one of the damp sponges frequently to mop the perspiration from his face and neck. He had taken care not to allow the "doctored" sponge to touch his skin anywhere. All being in readiness, he left the room.

No sooner gone than Timmy was out from his hiding place. He took the "doctored" sponge and put it in the place of the one the trainer had used upon himself, exchanging them. The stuff upon the sponge gave out a slightly pungent, indescribable odor that was not by any means pleasant, and Timmy grinned to himself at the thought of what was pretty certain to follow, for Stainer would be likely to discover the cheat immediately.

The Weasel only hoped that he would make the discovery too late; that was what he was aiming to accomplish.

CHAPTER XVI.

FUN IN THE COOP.

Timmy had already put the mark upon the wall as agreed.

In due time he heard Buck and Stainer coming, and made haste to get into his place of concealment.

From there he could see all that was going on in the room, and was an eager watcher, as can be imagined. He gave the signal agreed upon to assure his friend that all was well.

"Well, now, for the final training," observed Stainer.

"Yes, and we must make it a perfect one," added Buck. "But, what is that I smell?"

"I noticed it when I came in, too," Stainer averred. "Don't know what it can be, unless it is the new sponges. I have got a couple of new ones, you see, and fine ones, too."

"Yes; so I see."

"Well, strip, and let's get to business."

"All right; in a minute. Whew! ain't it warm, though. Hope it will be cooler to-morrow night."

"And so do I, for it is just sweltering.

This is the way I cool off, though, and I find that it works fine. Just try it, and see—Thunder! What ails this sponge?"

The secreted backer had to hold himself hard to keep from bursting out laughing and revealing his presence.

As he spoke, Stainer had grabbed up the "doctored" sponge and swiped it over his face and around his neck in an instant, rubbing well, and the deed was done before he made the discovery! The Harlem oil had got in its work!

He turned a sickly hue, dropped the sponge as he uttered the exclamation, and the next instant was plunging into a bucket of water and washing for all he was worth, wildly, desperately, while Butcher-boy Buck looked on with a smile playing around his mouth.

"What is the matter with you?" he demanded.

"That confounded sponge!" was the reply.

"What is the matter with it?"

"It stinks, that's what!"

"That's so?"

"Smell of it, and see if it don't."

"No, thank you; I can get quite enough of it where I am. What can be on it?"

"How do you suppose I know? But I will find out at the place where I bought it, and they will hear from me, you bet!"

And all the time he was swishing and swoshing in the bucket with desperate energy, trying to get the stuff off his face and neck before it could get in its fine work.

"Does it hurt you?" asked Buck, much amused.

"No; but it don't smell nice, and I want it off."

"Any one would think it was biting you."

"I'll bite that druggist, confound him!"

"What if it is a poison?" suggested Buck.

"Scott! Maybe it is!"

"Like enough."

With another sponge, the fellow was now wiping as desperately as he had washed.

His lively ablutions had somewhat reduced the power of the oil, but enough of it had penetrated the skin to make him an object of beauty within four and twenty hours.

And, as he wiped, he was looking around to see how in the world he could have made such a mistake.

"I guess we won't train to-night," observed Buck.

"If you do you will have to do it alone," cried Stainer.

"Is it so bad as that? Lucky that I didn't get a dose of it, then."

"The smell of it has made me sick. I am off; I must find out what it was, quick!"

And he grabbed his hat and away he went, slamming the door after him and descending the stairs two or three steps at a stride.

As soon as he had gone the Butcher-boy's backer came out from his hiding-place, fairly doubled up with laughter, and Buck joined him in his merriment as they shook hands.

"Wasn't that rich?" cried the boy.

"You bet it was!" agreed Buck. "You did it handsomely, Weasel!"

"I thought I could, for I knew about how he went to work with you, and I set the trap accordingly."

"Well, that settles Mr. Stainer. I hope he has got a dose that he will remember for many a day!"

"Ha, ha! That he will. Brag said it would bring out a rash on the skin, and if it does he may be sent to a hospital as a smallpox suspect. Ha, ha, ha!"

It was certainly something to laugh

about, as they recalled just how the rascal had looked and acted.

The sponge was put to soak, and there was no training done.

It was agreed that it would not do for them to be seen leaving the house together, so Buck put out the lights and went away first.

Some time later his boy backer quietly took leave.

Desiring to see his friend, Jerry, he bent his steps in the direction of his lodging.

As he drew near the house, he saw the officer come out, and, feeling in a particularly jolly mood, he could not resist the temptation to break out in song, which he did to this effect:

"When I am a copper,
I'll be a lady's man,
All polish and politeness,
I'll please them all I can.
And when I have picked out one
That suits me to a T,
I straightway shall arrest her,
And she my bride shall be!"

Jerry of course knew who was coming. And he had to smile as he caught every word. Timmy sang loudly enough for nothing to be lost upon his friend. There was no mistaking the point this time, either, for it was too plain to be misapprehended.

"At it again, are you?" Jerry cried.

"If you only knew how good I feel, Jerry, you would excuse me."

"Why, what is the matter?"

"It isn't matter this time, it is all merriment."

Forthwith Timmy told all that had taken place, and the officer joined in his rejoicing.

"But the other matter—what have you heard?" asked Timmy.

"Nothing, since this afternoon, and you know what that was. Now, what have you heard?"

"You know, of course, they heard from Washington, and it has been shown that the bride there isn't your Julia."

"Yes; and it was good and clever of you to keep that from me, too, Timmy. You are older in the head than you are in the body, my boy, and you understand a thing or two."

"Where are you going?"

"Down to the dock to see if either of the detectives comes up from Bay Beach on the next boat."

"All right; I will go with you. Of course, you will be on hand for the match to-morrow night. Won't you? Buck says he is going to dump Bowery Brag or die trying."

"I shall be there, Timmy, if I have nothing else to do. Anything to kill time while I am under this terrible strain of suspense. It is the worst that I ever had in my life, I tell you honestly."

"I don't wonder at it, Jerry, not a bit."

Thus they chatted until they reached the dock.

They were just in time, for the boat was in and was making fast.

Keeping close watch, Jerry soon uttered an ejaculation at sight of one of the detectives.

The detective saw him at about the same time, and came forward to meet the policeman, and as they shook hands the detective proceeded to give Jerry words of encouragement.

They had managed to get hold of the letter written to Hodgley by Miss Claverton, and it had confirmed their suspicions connecting Hodgley with the story that had been told them by the Valewood lawyer. But they had not yet discovered the hiding place of the young lady.

On the following night at midnight, however, was the time of an important ap-

pointment Hodgley had made, and it was believed that would reveal everything.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW THE MATCH CAME OFF.

"We'll be there, hey, Jerry?" cried Timmy.

"You can bet that I will, if I am anywhere," the policeman answered.

"And that will give us plenty of time to see the wrestling match first, if the time is midnight."

"Yes, for Hodgley has arranged to be present at that match," said the detective. "He is a sly old rat, that fellow is. All this is a part of his main scheme, you see."

"How so?" asked Jerry.

"Why, he has been spending days at Bay Beach; how can he know anything about the young lady? And, interested in this match on Saturday night, how can he be interested in anything else at the same time?"

"We'll try and make it interesting for him, you can bet!" declared Timmy. "I am all cocked and primed for him; all I need is to be touched off, and if there won't be fun you can fly me for a kite!"

The matter was discussed to some length, and the trio separated for the night.

And as Timmy went off in one direction, hoping to fall in again with Buck, he voiced another verse of his nonsensical rhymes for Jerry's benefit. Now that the skies were brightening he felt that Jerry could stand it.

"When I am a copper,
I'll be a copper fly.
You bet that I'll keep order
Upon my beat, or die!
And when I get promoted,
Then I'll be flier still;
And when I'm made a captain
I'll be too fly to kill!"

Before Timmy reached his destination he came suddenly upon Brag Clawson and Stainer, and had just time enough to dodge out of sight before he was discovered.

"I can't understand it," Stainer was saying. "I had it all arranged before he got there, and how I made such a mistake is more than I can see. My face and neck are beginning to burn like fire!"

"Serves you right!" cried the Bowery Wrestler. "You will know what you are about another time, I hope. Now, there is doubt about my doing Buck up, for he is as strong as an ox, and looks to be in first-class condition. But, maybe Hodgley can pull me out all right."

"You think so?"

"Well, he has bet heavy on me, and he will do it if he can."

"I hope he will, for I have got some sly bets laid on you myself. I felt sure of dosing Buck, so he would not be in it."

The Weasel grated his teeth as he listened to this.

He resolved that he would be in it, and that to the last minute, if no one else was.

Listening to all they had to say, he waited until they had parted company, when he stepped out from his place of temporary hiding and went on his way to find his friend.

Buck was found, and their further plans were laid.

Saturday night.

The rear room of one of Hodgley's Bowery saloons was well filled.

It was the time set for the match, and the wrestlers were on hand in their tights.

Bowery Brag had his trainer, Gibbins, but as Buck's man had failed to put in an appearance, Buck had given that important office to Timmy the Weasel.

The betting was even, for the two young men were of a size, and no one appeared to care to lay any odds that either the one or the other would win. But the betting was strong.

Hodgley was there, the biggest man in the place, and the most imposing in appearance.

Every one paid deference to him.

Timmy had his eyes upon him, without seeming to be watching, and once he caught him and Bowery Brag exchanging some remarks.

It was done in a moment, almost, and the big man shook his head as he turned away. This was not lost upon Timmy, and he meant to have "an eye out for squalls."

At the proper time a ring was formed, and the two wrestlers faced each other.

Jerry McKenna was there, as were also the two detectives.

The word was given, and the two young athletes grappled with each other and the great match that had been the theme of local interest for weeks was actually on.

There was not much advantage for either one the first time, for they appeared to be even in strength, and their holds had been about equal. It was a tough tussle.

The interest was keen, and when, finally, after a good deal of time and effort, Butcher-boy Buck floored his antagonist, there was a round of applause.

Hodgley frowned, and stepped to the bar for a drink.

Securing it, he turned away with the glass in his hand, giving his attention to what was going on.

The Weasel, watching him narrowly, saw an exchange of glances between him and Bowery Brag. Timmy knew that something was in the wind, but could not guess what.

The betting was now stronger in favor of Buck, and Hodgley, through a man who was with him, was taking everything that offered.

In due time the wrestlers came up for the second trial.

This time Buck got an advantage, and it looked as if the match would soon end. But Brag was game to the last.

The excitement was great, and some pressed rather close, among them Hodgley, with the glass of liquor in his hand, and presently, in an attempt to step back out of the way quickly, some of the liquor was spilled.

In the same instant, it appeared, Buck's foot caught the wet spot, and he slipped, and before he could recover himself Brag had placed him on his back.

Then the other side did the cheering.

Timmy Keen believed he saw through the scheme now, and when he saw Brag smile as he glanced at Hodgley, he felt sure of it.

The Weasel worked himself around until he was in front of the big man, and when the wrestlers came up for another and the final test, turned to him and cried out:

"I am onto your game, Mr. Hodgley! You can't play that trick a second time, you bet! If you spill that, I will punch my fist into your paunch clear up to my elbow! I have been watching, and I am onto your haze as big as a house! Fair play, here!"

The boy shouted out aloud, so that all might hear, and the big man grew very red.

"What do you mean, boy?" he roared.

"Mean just what I say, that's what! You have done it once, but you won't again!"

That was enough; others took up the cry now that their eyes were opened, and it was not likely that the trick would be

Further attempted. Hodgley looked furious.

"I'll have you put out of here, you mosquito!" he cried. "What interest have I who wins? Money is no object to me!"

"You want to win my fiver!" cried the Weasel.

"Ha, ha! That is pretty good. Why, boy, I light cigars with five-dollar bills when nothing else is handy!"

"You will never light one with mine, see if you do!" Timmy retorted. "You are not in it, this time, old walrus! You will find that I am onto you heavy before I get done with you!"

One of the detectives jerked Timmy out of the way, fearing he would say too much, and gave him a word of caution.

Timmy caught on, and to cover it effectually, blurted out:

"Let him play fair, then!"

"The boy is right!" some one else shouted.

"That's what's the matter! Put up that glass, old duffer!"

Hodgley drained off the contents of the glass, and replaced it on the bar.

By that time the wrestlers were at it again, and now Bowery Brag had the advantage slightly.

There was a look of determination on Buck's face, however, and his muscles were standing out like knotted cords.

Some little time was spent, each watching for an opportunity, and suddenly it came, to be seized by Buck. With a tremendous effort he lifted his antagonist clear from the floor and dashed him down with a force that knocked him windless.

The match was over; Buck had won. And about that time Timmy Keen saw a man slip a message into Hodgley's hand.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MYSTERY CLEARED.

It was done in a clever manner.

Timmy's position allowed him to see the act, but the chances were that no one else could have seen it.

While bets were being paid Hodgley stepped to the end of the bar and read his message, and a smile lighted his face. He thrust it into his side coat pocket and turned away.

Just a corner of the paper was visible, and as he passed Timmy the lad nipped it with thumb and finger and secured it.

Putting it out of sight, he made his way to Jerry.

"Come!" he said.

"Where to?" Jerry demanded.

"Don't know yet, but we are in it."

As soon as they were outside, Timmy explained what had taken place, and they repaired immediately to where they could read the note.

It was as follows:

"Come at once. She gives in. Is ready to sign. No. —, — Street."

"Thank Heavens!" cried Jerry. "Let's get the detectives and go there in all haste, and we shall be able to rescue her before the wretch can get there at all! Come!"

"Hold hard on your trolley!" warned the backer. "This is the chance of your life, Jerry. You don't want any detectives in it. They will get there fast enough; they are not going to lose sight of Hodgley. What we must do is to go there at once, and you can—"

"You are right, you are right!" Jerry cried. "I can rescue my dar—Mrs. Claverton's daughter, I mean, and she will owe me a debt of gratitude! Timmy, you are my good genius!"

"She will fall into your arms, Jerry, and there will be a smashin' big tableau, which I'm just sick to see; so, come on!"

And Timmy began to sing:

"I long to be a copper,
A copper bold and brave,
To do the grand heroic,
And some fine lady save;
Then on my manly bosom
She'll lay her head and say:
'My finest of the finest,
I am your own this day!'"

"You are welcome to sing all you want to now," averred Jerry. "You have done me a favor I can never forget."

"We are in too much of a hurry to do any more singing now, Jerry," was the response. "We must step out and get there, and we can lay our little plan of action as we go."

And so they did, and when they had reached their destination it was all arranged.

Jerry rang the bell, and as soon as the door was opened he inquired for Mr. Hodgley.

He was not there, of course.

"Well, he expects me, and will soon be here," Jerry declared, confidently.

"I don't know about that," the man started to say, but Jerry interrupted him.

"Oh, it is all right, my man. I am a lawyer who is to attend to the signing of a certain paper. It is all right. Can I see the lady?"

There was scarcely room for doubt.

"Who is the boy?" the man asked, further.

"A chap Mr. Hodgley sent for me. It is all right, my good man. But, if you prefer to wait until Mr. Hodgley gets here, well and good. It will save time if I get things ready, however."

"Well, come this way."

Having closed the door, the man led the way up the stairs, and unlocked and opened the door of a room.

Jerry stepped in, and Timmy held back a little in order to let the policeman have the field all to himself. There was a moment of silence, soon broken.

"My darling!" cried Jerry, theatrically. "I find you at last!"

"Mr. McKenna—Jerry!" the fair prisoner exclaimed, and, true to Timmy's prediction, she fell into his arms.

The man who had admitted them stood for a moment paralyzed, almost, but now made a dash at Jerry. Watchful Timmy, however, deftly caught his foot and tripped him, and the next moment Jerry had made him prisoner!

It had all been done so quickly and so quietly that no one else in the house was likely to be alarmed. Then explanations followed; the policeman and the rescued girl chatting away like two happy children. Timmy did not interrupt them, but had an eye out for business.

Presently the door below opened, and a heavy step was heard.

Then it was that the backer warned Jerry, and they stood ready to receive Mr. Hodgley when he came up.

But he did not come; he stood below in the hall and called out "Samuels!"

That was probably the name of the prisoner. He did not get Samuels, but others in the house appeared, and by that time the detectives were at the door.

Hodgley turned to open it, and when they had entered they covered him with a brace of revolvers, with a peremptory order to him to surrender.

The rum magnate had no choice, and a more surprised man never lived, perhaps.

"Right this way!" called out Timmy Keen, then. "We are waiting for you, boys. Right this way! We have the lady safe and sound, and all you have got to do is scoop in the prisoners! Come right along; don't be amazed."

But, amazed they were, nevertheless—a joyous sort of amazement, and Timmy was congratulated.

The woman after whom Julia Claverton

had been named was a very rich and very eccentric personage. Julia's father had at one time rendered her a great service. At her death she left her property all to her namesake, to become hers at her twenty-fifth birthday, provided her brother—the woman's brother—did not perform certain conditions in the mean time. If he did that, half was to go to him. Meanwhile, Julia might resign her rights, if she chose.

Mr. Claverton had kept the knowledge of this wealth from his daughter, and it was a surprise to her. Rufus Hodgley was the brother in question. He made up his mind to have the wealth without performing the conditions, one of which was that he should give up saloon-keeping, the sister having been a strong temperance advocate. He had laid well his plans, as we have seen, but, thanks to Timmy Keen and the others, his artful scheme had come to naught. And, as the time was brief, the property all fell into the young lady's hands, as the testator had stipulated.

The unprincipled schemers were punished as they deserved.

And, of course, Jerry married the lady, to, in time, resign from the force. He had objected to this, but his protest was overruled by the plea: "Don't you think more of me, Jerry, dear, than of your profession?"

Of course he did!

It turned out that Paul Clayman had eloped with a pretty actress, fearing his mother and sisters might oppose the match if he allowed them to learn of it, but his bride proved herself a treasure and all were glad to welcome her among them at their home in Valewood.

We have forgotten to mention one thing—the result of the oil on the face and neck of Ned Stainer. Timmy met him the next day—a Sunday, the day after the match and the events that followed—and he looked as if he had had a brush with a nest of hornets. The young backer was hilarious at the sight, and, as it was too good to keep, he let the fellow know who had done it for him.

Then Ned was indeed "madder than a hornet," and pitched into Timmy then and there, but he got the worst of it in about one minute, and Timmy went off singing:

"Some day I'll be a copper,
And with them all parade,
And lay all other coppers
Away out in the shade.
Roundsmen, and then sergeant,
And captain then, of course;
Then, maybe, superintendent,
Of the finest police force!"

And so we take leave of him, happy in that proud ambition, and with a host of friends to back him.

THE END.

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